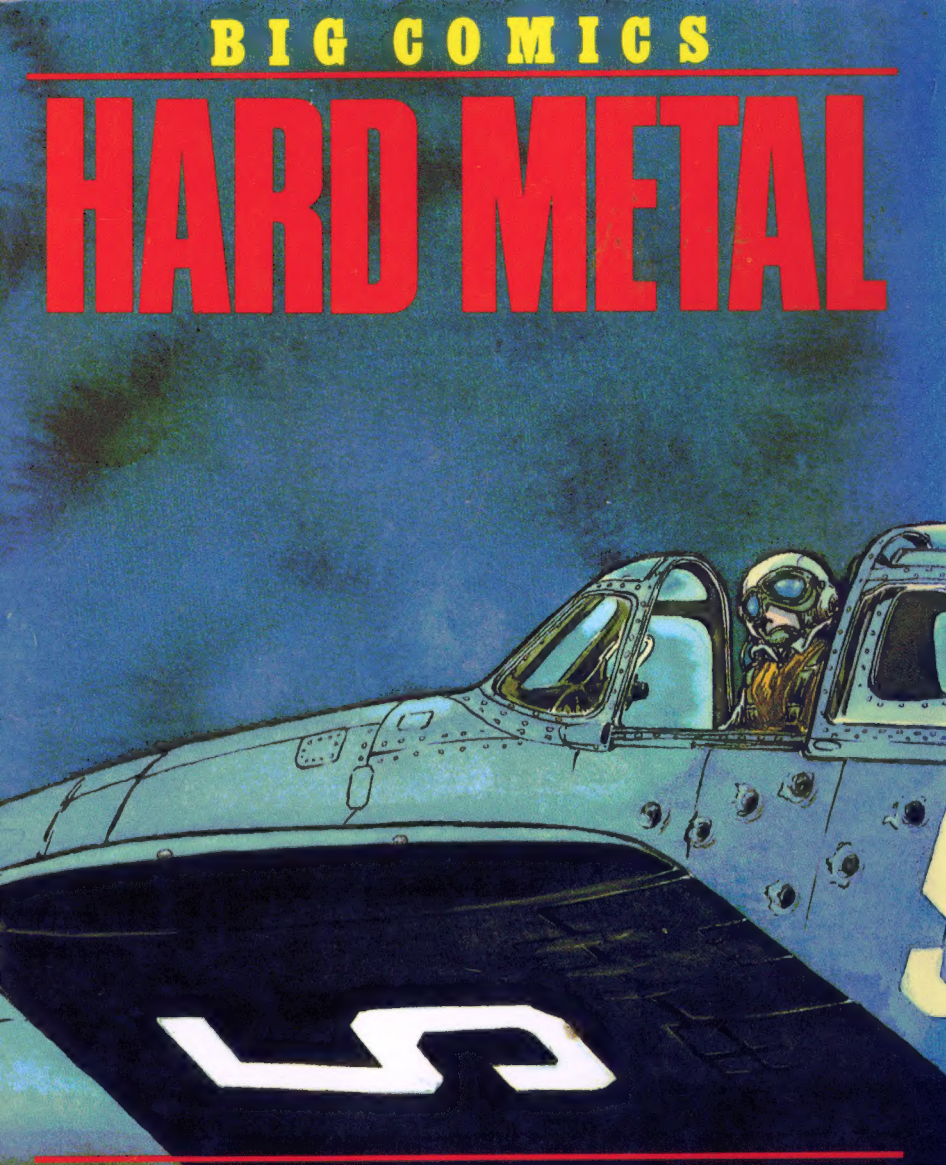
BIG COMICS

HARD METAL



［ハードメタル］松本零士

by L.MATSUMOTO

NOTICE

Japanese comics or *manga* are read from back to front and from right to left across the page, which is the exact opposite of how we make and read them here in the West. If you reader supports Japanese *manga* format then please set this option. If not then you might want to set single page viewing to help avoid confusion.

HARD METAL Volume 1

part of the *Battlefield* series of military manga

by Leiji Matsumoto

A Google Translate ® adaptation

English language cleanup
by Richard Mandel

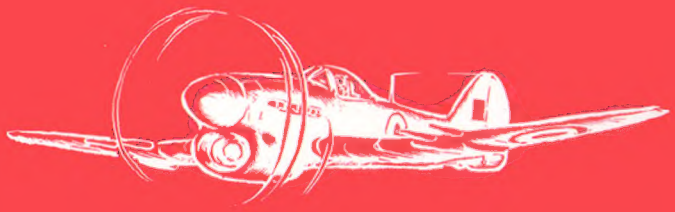
Released in 2026 by fans for fans
No infringement intended or implied

■松本零士■
LEIJI MATSUMOTO

EDITOR'S NOTE

This manga was "scanlated" from the original Japanese by feeding the individual pages through the free Google Translate AI program and then the results cleaned up considerably for better reading by English speaking audiences. Google Translate AI is a far from perfect tool as I write this (2026) but as I said it was free and you can't beat that with a stick. The end results were barely readable and I've had to both rewrite and interpolate considerably in places in order to produce an English adaptation that reads well.

My apologies to all of you who know the language. All I can say is that the rest of us have waited this long for some kind (*any* kind) of English language adaptation of this classic Leiji Matsumoto manga. If you can and are willing to do better then by all means feel free to do so. I won't be offended. I'll enjoy your effort with everyone else who reads it. (R.M.)



THESE NINE STORIES ARE
PUBLISHED ON BIG COMIC
THROUGH 1984 TO 1986.
THEY WON POPULARITY
BY THEIR ACTUALITY AND
ARTISTIC PICTURE

HARD METAL CONTENTS

1) Bombing Unit Nue 3
1984.9.10

2) The Silent Sun 33
1984.9.25

3) Phantom No. 800 57
1984.11.25

4) The Queen of the Coral Sea 81
1984.1.10

5) The Black-Clad Sun 105
1985.2.25

6) The Six Shot Civilization 130
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1985.8.25

8) Shiden Blue Blood 179
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HARD METAL

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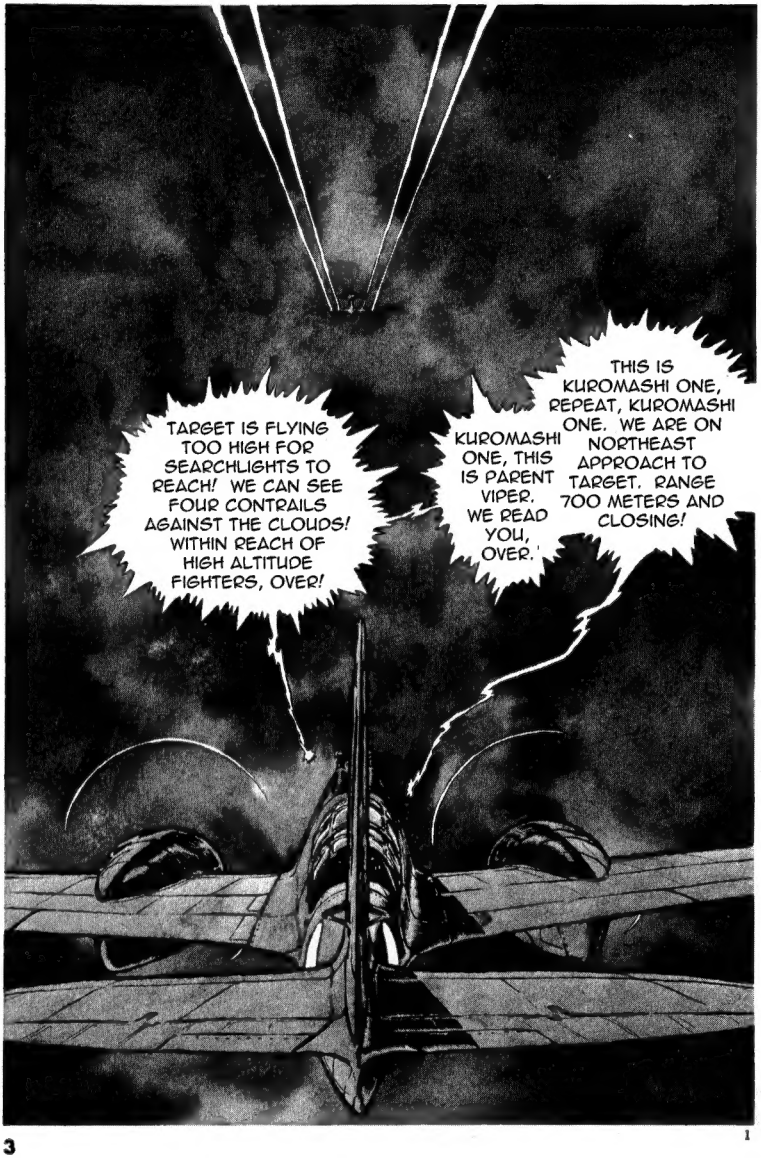
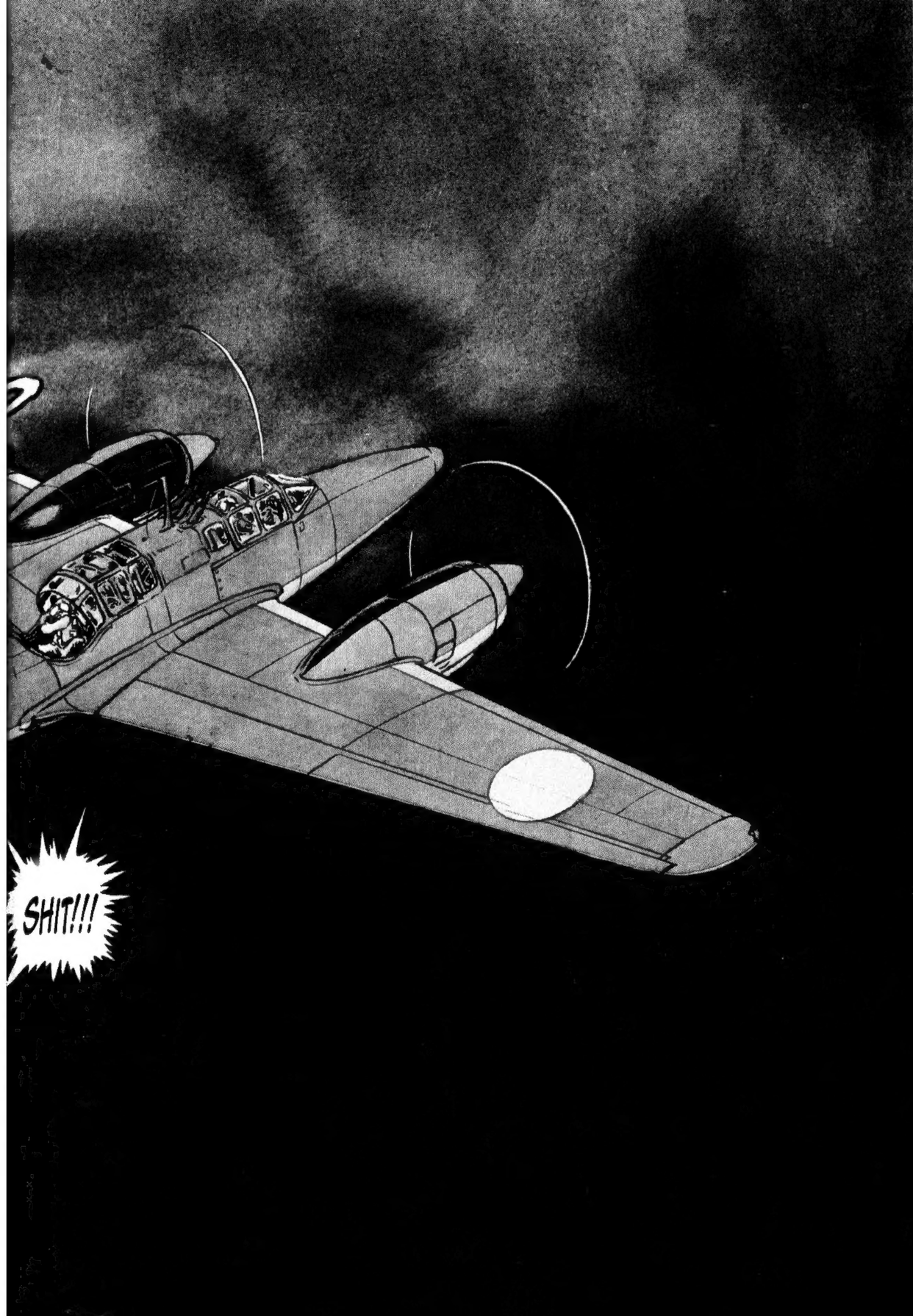

TARGET IS FLYING TOO HIGH FOR SEARCHLIGHTS TO REACH! WE CAN SEE FOUR CONTRAILS AGAINST THE CLOUDS! WITHIN REACH OF HIGH ALTITUDE FIGHTERS, OVER!
KUROMASHI ONE, THIS IS PARENT VIPER. WE READ YOU, OVER.
THIS IS KUROMASHI ONE, REPEAT, KUROMASHI ONE. WE ARE ON NORTHEAST APPROACH TO TARGET. RANGE 700 METERS AND CLOSING!

BOMBING UNIT NUE

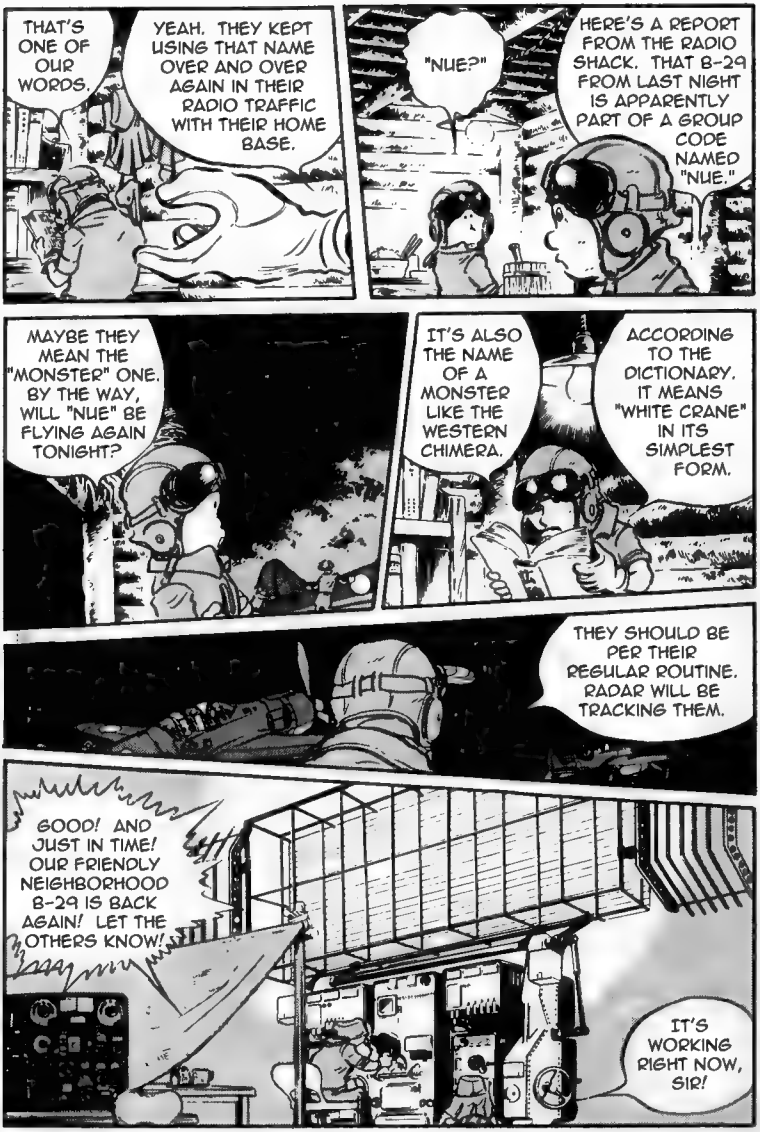


ISN'T THE NIGHT FIGHTER SUPPOSED TO TAKE THEM OUT, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?
THEY HAD TO HAVE DONE IT. THOSE WERE THE ONLY TWO AIRCRAFT IN THE SKY THAT THE RADAR DETECTED.
IF THEY CAUGHT OUR PLANE FIRST ....
PROBABLY THE BELLY TURRET OF A B-29. 12.7MM BROWNING TWINS.
LOOK AT ALL OF THE SHELL HOLES. ALL OF THE HITS ARE FROM ABOVE.
SIR, WE'VE ONLY GOT TWO PLANES LEFT. MAYBE WE SHOULD CALL IT A DAY?
AS IN GO HOME?
WE'LL GO BACK TO BASE, BUT NOT HOME ... EVEN THOUGH IT'S SO CLOSE. ONLY A BOAT RIDE AWAY.
AFTER ALL, WE'RE PART OF ITS LAST LINE OF DEFENSE.
I'LL BET THEY DIDN'T EVEN HAVE TIME TO BAIL OUT. POOR MOTHERS.

IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE WAR NO ONE WOULD MESS WITH IT. IT'S GOT NOTHING AND IS WORTH NOTHING, OR WAS.
NOT MUCH TO IT. LOOKS LIKE A BEAN WHELK FROM ABOUT, AND ABOUT AS BIG.
THIS ISLAND IS THE PITS.
FURTHERMORE, IT'S JUST BIG ENOUGH FOR A RUNWAY AND AN AIRBASE TO INTERCEPT THEM.
NOW THE WAR COMES, AND IT JUST SO HAPPENS THAT EVERY AMERICAN B-29 FLIGHT PASSES OVER LITTLE WORTHLESS OKINOHA ISLAND.
AGREED. B-29S ARE VERY FORMIDABLE OPPONENTS.
IT WAS A GREAT THEORY BUT IT'S NOT WORKING IN PRACTICE.
7
THERE'S ONLY JUST ENOUGH ROOM FOR EVERYTHING, AND WE STAND A VERY GOOD CHANCE OF THEM FINDING AND POUNDING US INTO RUIN.
"SHIKAKUYAMA IMPERIAL AIR BASE." SOUNDS MORE IMPRESSIVE THAN IT'S WORKED OUT IN REALITY, YOU KNOW.
YOU'VE GOT A POINT THERE. I'M SURPRISED THEY HAVEN'T DONE IT YET.

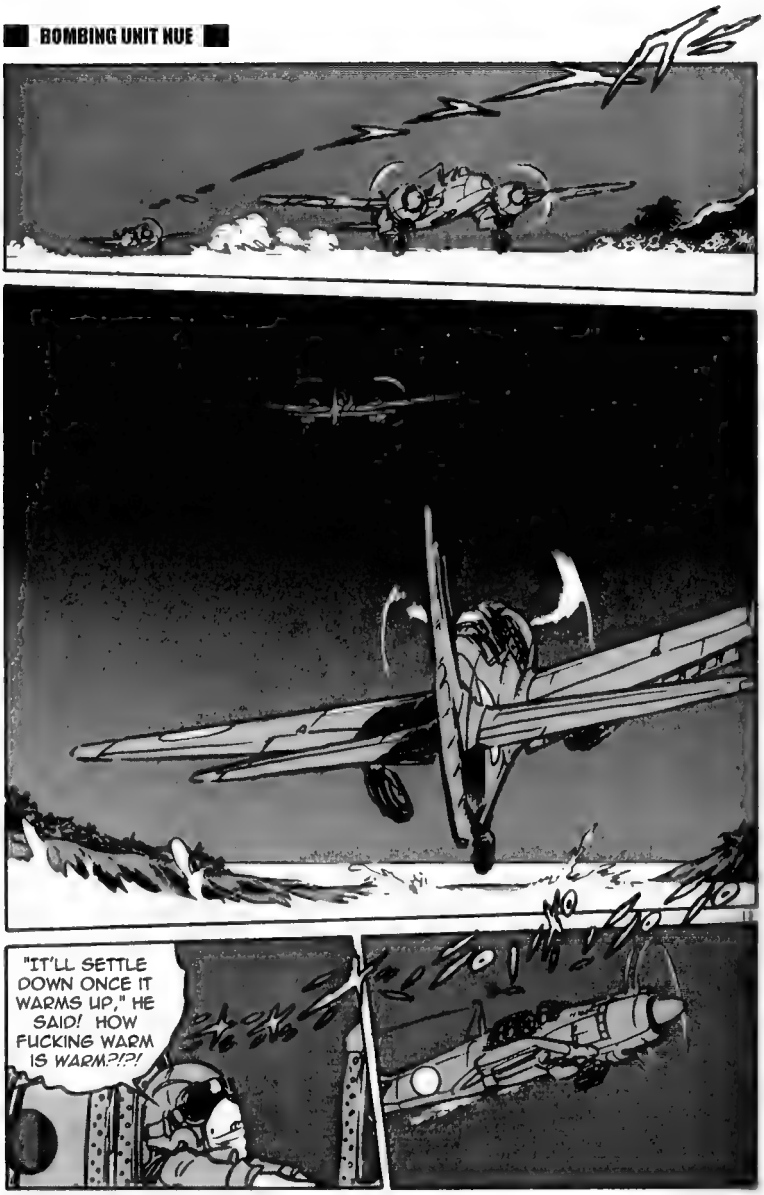
OUR LAST TWO PLANES. I WONDER, MOTSUYARA.
HOW LONG BEFORE WE LOSE THESE TOO?
LOOKS LIKE THE RADAR OPERATOR'S HAVING A BAD DAY.
HE'S HUMAN. HE GETS TO HAVE BAD DAYS TOO.
IT'S THE WAY THEY MOUNTED THAT DAMN ANTENNA! THE LEAST BIT OF WIND AND IT STARTS SHAKING, AND THEN MY SCOPE GOES NUTS!
WE KNOW YOU'RE DOING YOUR BEST WITH IT.
SEIJA, IT ISN'T YOUR FAULT. YOU CAN'T HELP THE RICKETY SET THEY SENT US!
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN, SIR. YOU KNOW I'LL DO MY BEST WITH WHAT I'VE GOT. I JUST WISH WE HAD A NEWER SET AND THAT THEY'D REMOUNT THAT ANTENNA RIGHT!
TRUE. THE B-29S ONLY COME OUT AT NIGHT.
ONLY THERE'S NOTHING TO SEE DURING THE DAY.
WELL, IT'S NOT BLOWING NOW, AND WITH IT NICE AND CLEAR LIKE IT IS TODAY YOU SHOULD GET FULL 360 DEGREE COVERAGE!

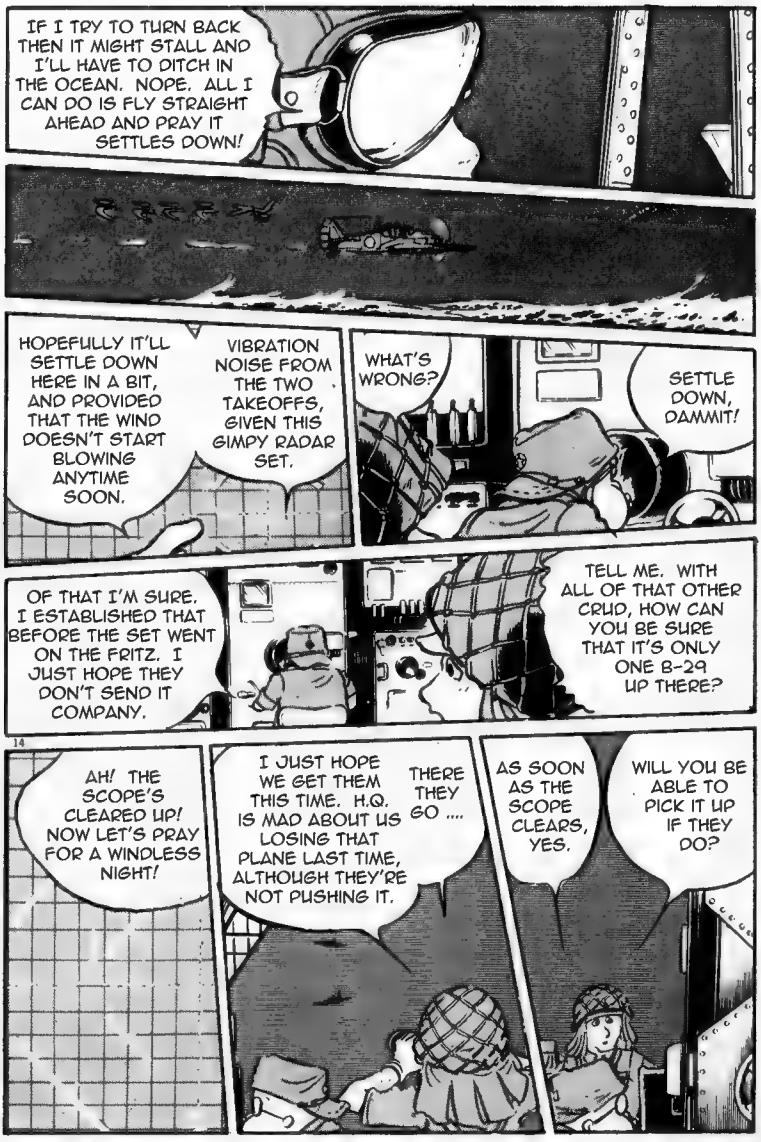
AND YOU CAN'T EAT A PLANE. I WOULD IF I COULD, I'M SO HUNGRY! OH WELL. AT LEAST I CAN SLEEP.
YOU KNOW, WITH ONLY TWO PLANES LEFT WE'RE NOT MUCH OF A FORCE, ARE WE.
SO MUCH FOR THAT. I'M READY TO EAT. HOW 'BOUT YOU?
YOU CAN FORGET IT. WE'RE OUT OF FOOD.
IT'S THIS PLACE, I'M TELLING YOU.
IT'S GETTING TO ALL OF US.
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU GUYS, BUT I SOMETIMES HAVE TROUBLE SEEING STRAIGHT.
SO MANY OPTIONS! DEATH BY BOREDOM, BY HUNGER, BY GETTING SHOT DOWN!


THAT'S ONE OF OUR WORDS.
YEAH. THEY KEPT USING THAT NAME OVER AND OVER AGAIN IN THEIR RADIO TRAFFIC WITH THEIR HOME BASE.
"NUE?"
HERE'S A REPORT FROM THE RADIO SHACK. THAT B-29 FROM LAST NIGHT IS APPARENTLY PART OF A GROUP CODE NAMED "NUE."
MAYBE THEY MEAN THE "MONSTER" ONE. BY THE WAY, WILL "NUE" BE FLYING AGAIN TONIGHT?
IT'S ALSO THE NAME OF A MONSTER LIKE THE WESTERN CHIMERA.
ACCORDING TO THE DICTIONARY, IT MEANS "WHITE CRANE" IN ITS SIMPLEST FORM.
THEY SHOULD BE PER THEIR REGULAR ROUTINE. RADAR WILL BE TRACKING THEM.
GOOD! AND JUST IN TIME! OUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD B-29 IS BACK AGAIN! LET THE OTHERS KNOW!
IT'S WORKING RIGHT NOW, SIR!

MAINLAND, THIS IS SHIKAKUYAMA! LONE B-29 ON APPROACH, RANGE 150 KILOMETERS, ALTITUDE 10,000 METERS!
READING 150 KILOMETERS OUT, ALTITUDE 10,000 METERS! IT'S THEM AGAIN, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT!
YES SIR!
USE BOTH PLANES THIS TIME, JUST TO BE SURE.
DON'T QUESTION IT! JUST KNOCK IT DOWN THIS TIME!! THAT'S AN ORDER!!!
ONE PLANE AGAIN? WHY ONLY--
THERE AREN'T MORE FLYING IN LINE, I CHECKED THAT. THEY'RE ALSO NOT STACKED ON TOP OF EACH OTHER EITHER.
A LONE B-29! THAT'S SO WEIRD!!
I CAN ONLY READ ONE NO MATTER WHAT I DO!
SO WHY DO THE AMERICANS KEEP SENDING OVER THIS ONE LONE B-29? IT'S NOT NORMAL ....
B-29S USUALLY BOMB IN MASSED FORMATIONS.

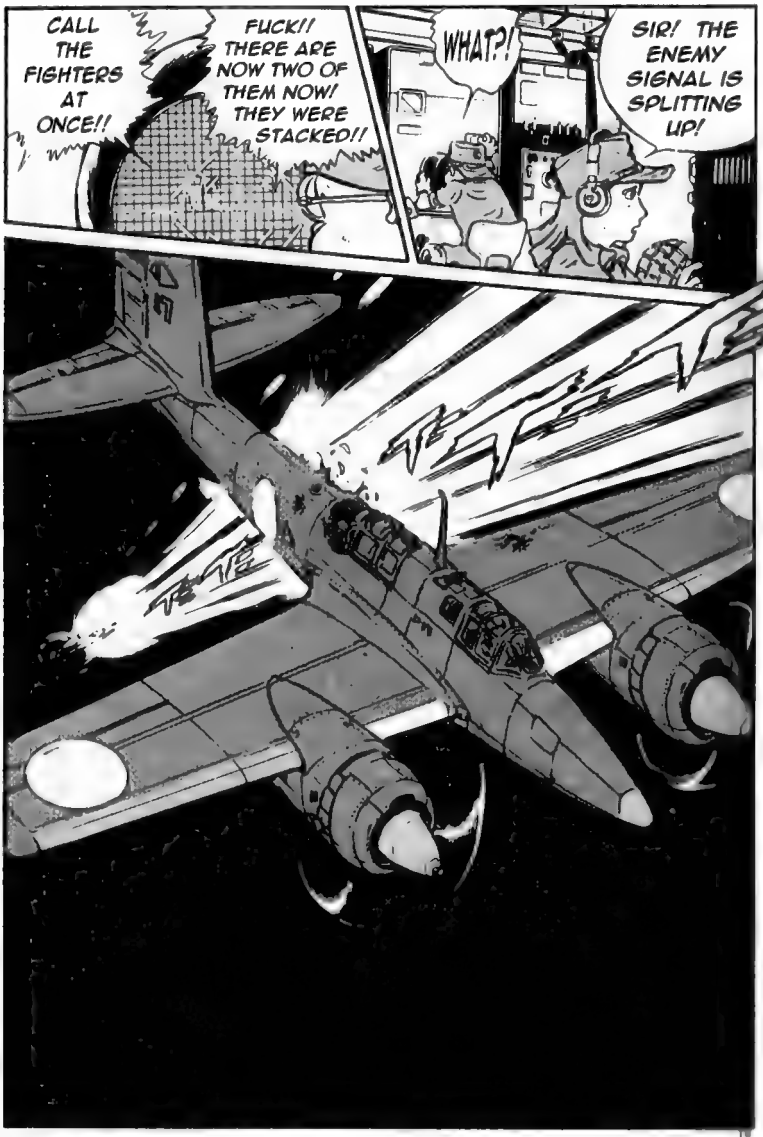
THANK YOU, BASE. MISS NUE IS ENJOYING THE FLIGHT, OVER.
BASE TO MISS NUE, PROPER COURSE AND ALTITUDE CONFIRMED, OVER.
I'VE ALSO CONFIRMED IT FROM THEIR RADIO TRAFFIC. WANT TO LISTEN?
RADAR SAYS IT'S THE SAME B-29 FROM LAST NIGHT.
I'LL BET A GAY GUY IS MANNING THEIR RADIO.
YOU GUYS ARE PROBABLY HEARING THINGS.
AND IT WAS A WOMAN'S VOICE THAT ANSWERED!
"MISS NUE?" MISS NUE?!"
12
BUT IF THEY ARE WOMEN I HOPE SOME OF THEM BAIL OUT HERE! I NEED A GOOD FUCK!
IT HASN'T BEEN FLOWN IN A WHILE! IT'LL SETTLE DOWN ONCE IT WARMS UP!
HEY! THE ENGINE SOUNDS ROUGH!


"IT'LL SETTLE DOWN ONCE IT WARMS UP," HE SAID! HOW FUCKING WARM IS WARM?!?!


IF I TRY TO TURN BACK THEN IT MIGHT STALL AND I'LL HAVE TO DITCH IN THE OCEAN. NOPE. ALL I CAN DO IS FLY STRAIGHT AHEAD AND PRAY IT SETTLES DOWN!
HOPEFULLY IT'LL SETTLE DOWN HERE IN A BIT, AND PROVIDED THAT THE WIND DOESN'T START BLOWING ANYTIME SOON.
VIBRATION NOISE FROM THE TWO TAKEOFFS, GIVEN THIS GIMPY RADAR SET.
WHAT'S WRONG?
SETTLE DOWN, DAMMIT!
OF THAT I'M SURE. I ESTABLISHED THAT BEFORE THE SET WENT ON THE FRITZ. I JUST HOPE THEY DON'T SEND IT COMPANY.
TELL ME. WITH ALL OF THAT OTHER CRUD, HOW CAN YOU BE SURE THAT IT'S ONLY ONE B-29 UP THERE?
14
AH! THE SCOPE'S CLEARED UP! NOW LET'S PRAY FOR A WINDLESS NIGHT!
I JUST HOPE WE GET THEM THIS TIME. H.Q. IS MAD ABOUT US LOSING THAT PLANE LAST TIME, ALTHOUGH THEY'RE NOT PUSHING IT.
THERE THEY GO ....
AS SOON AS THE SCOPE CLEARS, YES.
WILL YOU BE ABLE TO PICK IT UP IF THEY DO?

Ug
HEY! I'VE GOT SOME SERIOUS ENGINE PROBLEMS HERE!
I THINK IT'S OUR FRIEND "MISS NUE." CLOSING ON TARGET.
I'VE GOT A LONE B-29 AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK HIGH. NICE SET OF CONTRAILS.
IT'S A GOOD THING "MISS NUE" HAS NO FIGHTER ESCORT!
I'M HEADING FOR THEIR UNDERSIDE! GET READY!
DO THE BEST YOU CAN! I'M NOT LETTING "MISS NUE" GET AWAY THIS TIME!

HOLY SHIT!!
OH GOOD. THERE! IT'S SOUNDING BETTER NOW ....
16

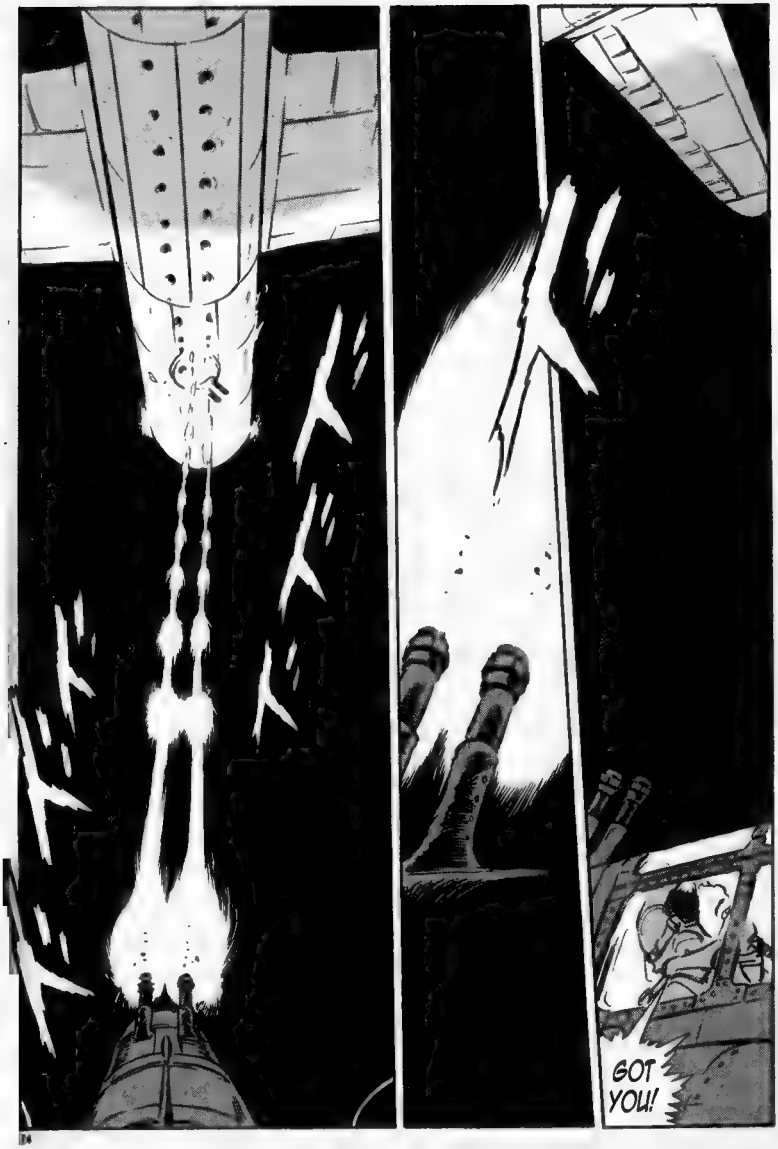

CALL THE FIGHTERS AT ONCE!!
FUCK!! THERE ARE NOW TWO OF THEM NOW! THEY WERE STACKED!!
WHAT?!
SIR! THE ENEMY SIGNAL IS SPLITTING UP!

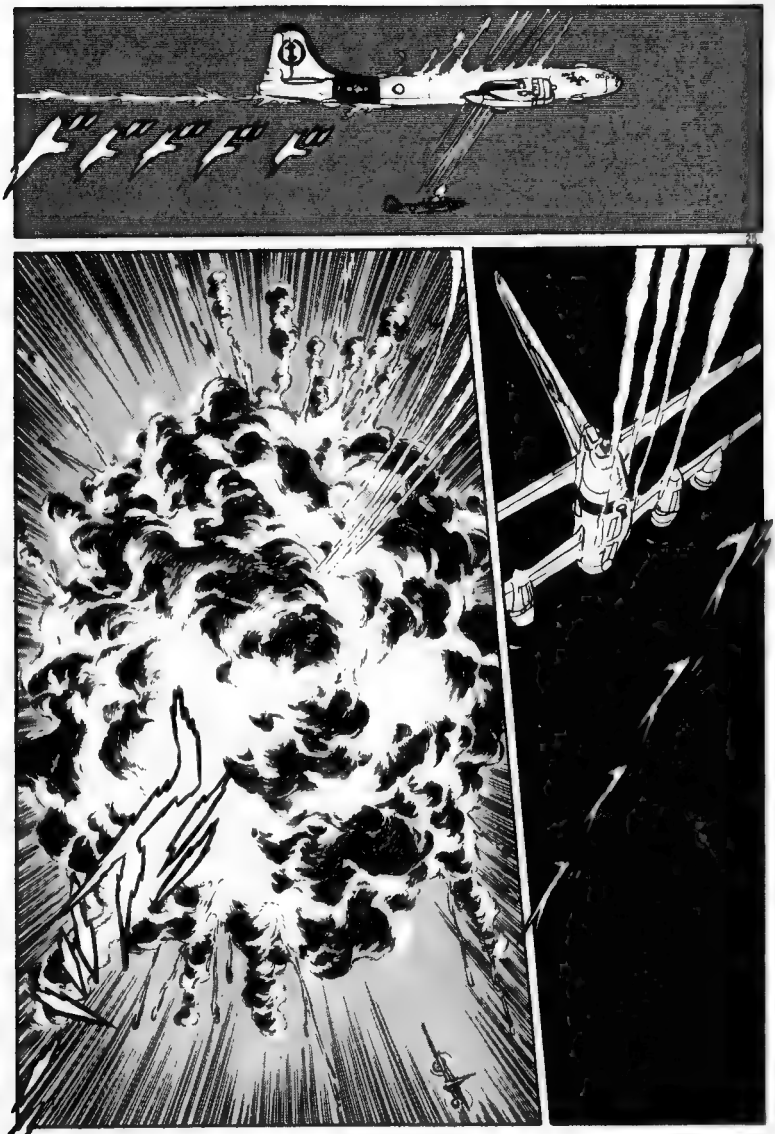
MORE THAN ONE?! SHIT!!
18

WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER ONE?
SIR! THEY GOT "MISS NUE!" SHE'S BADLY DAMAGED!
A B-29. IT'S ON FIRE.
WHAT'S THAT?
WE GOT HER! WE GOT "MISS NUE!"
20

THE LONE B-29 LEFT IS LEAVING!
NOW IT'S TIME TO TAKE OUT THE OTH--
IT MUST HAVE BEEN A SPECIAL MISSION OR SOMETHING! WHEN YOU GOT "MISS NUE" THAT ENDED IT!
WE'RE GETTING THIS ONE TOO!!
WELL WE'RE NOT LETTING THIS ONE GET AWAY!

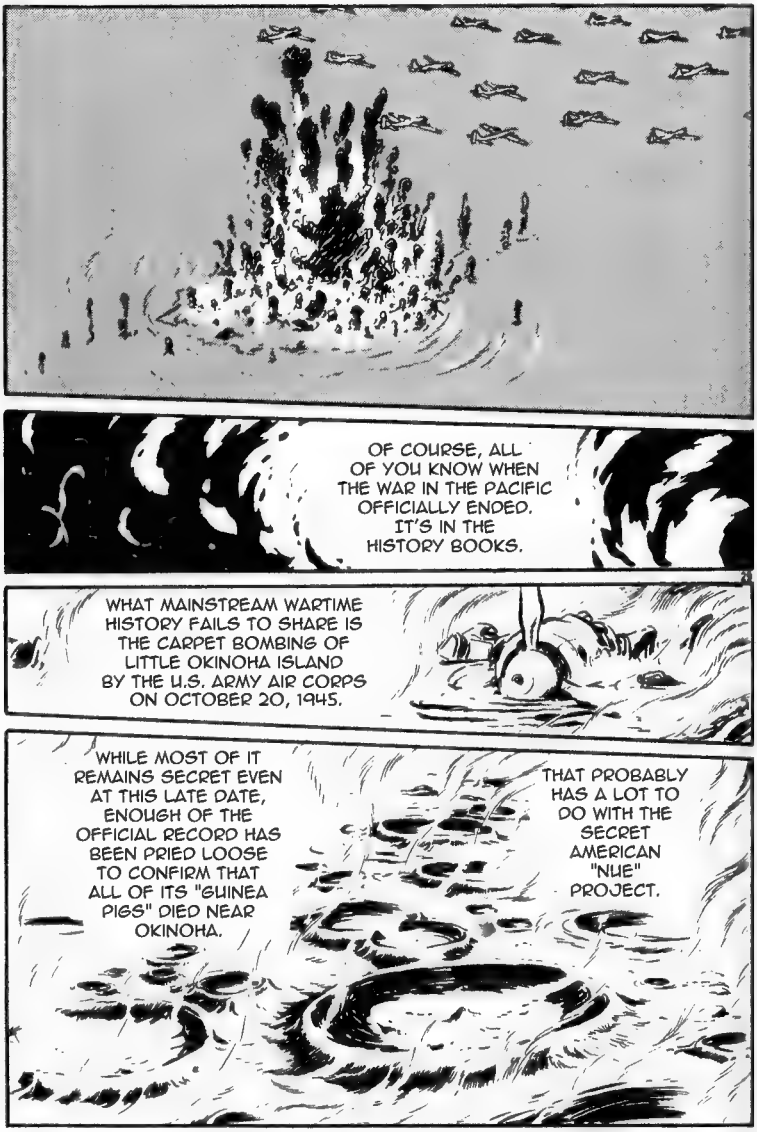
ALMOST
... ALMOST
THERE
... !!

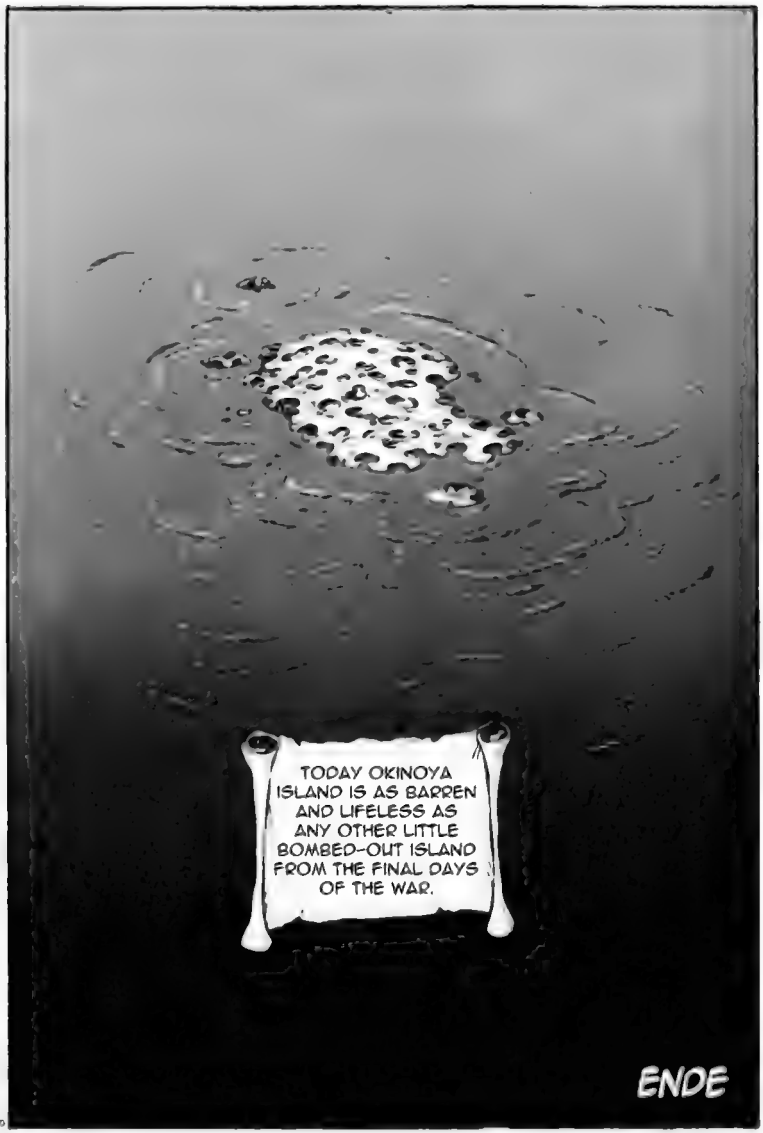

GOT YOU!



"MISS NUE" HAD AN ALL-FEMALE CREW!
WOMEN! ALL OF THEM!!
THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE! WAS IT SOME KIND OF EXPERIMENT OR WHAT? THAT'S REALLY WEIRD ....
26
IT AMPLIFIES ANY RADAR SIGNAL AND THEN BOUNCES IT OFF OF THE OCEAN SURFACE. THAT'S WHAT MADE MY RADAR GO WACKY.
THIS THING'S REALLY GOOD.
THAT'S WHY OUR RADAR COULDN'T PICK UP THE SECOND PLANE.
SEE THIS! I THINK IT'S A SPECIAL DEVICE USED TO SCRAMBLE RADAR SIGNALS WHEN A BIG BOMBER LIKE THE B-29 IS AT LOW ALTITUDE.
MAKES ME WONDER WHAT ELSE THE AMERICANS ARE COOKING UP.
USING THE WHOLE OCEAN SURFACE AS ITS OWN ANTENNA. THAT'S DAMN INGENIOUS. BETTER DISMOUNT THIS. THE EXPERTS BACK HOME WILL WANT TO SEE IT.
DO YOU THINK MAYBE THAT'S WHAT THEY WERE TESTING?

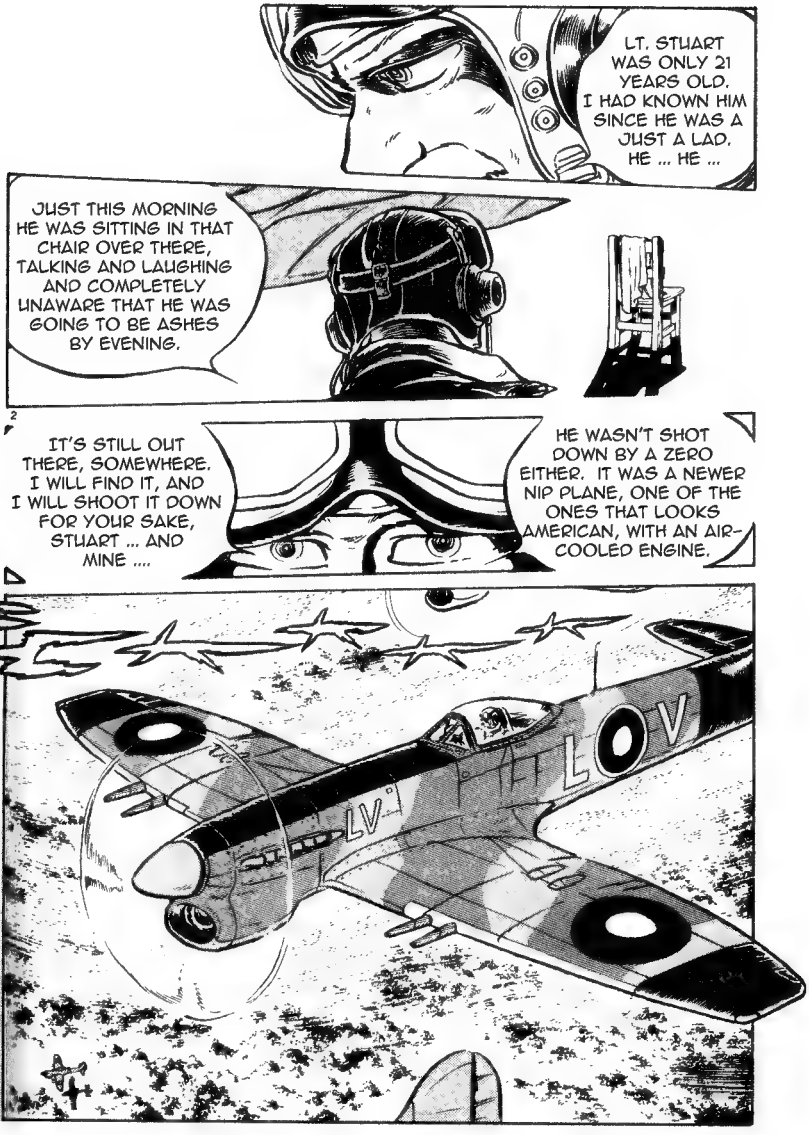
LATER ....
OCTOBER 20, 1945. IT'S ALREADY AUTUMN BACK HOME. HERE IT'S STILL SUMMER.
DAMN, BUT IT'S HOT. WHAT'S TODAY?
HEY! YOU HEAR THAT? ANOTHER B-29 DAYLIGHT BOMBING RAID. THEY GOT BALLS, NOW THAT WE DON'T HAVE ANY MORE FUEL FOR OUR PLANES.
YOU REALIZE WE HAVEN'T HEARD FROM THE MAINLAND SINCE THE END OF AUGUST? I WONDER WHAT'S GOING ON ....
WHY? WE'RE A LITTLE ISLAND IN A BIG OCEAN AND WE CAN'T HURT THEM ANYMORE.
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THOSE WOMEN? THAT'S WHY.
MAYBE THEY'RE FINALLY COMING AFTER US, YOU THINK?
SOUNDS A LITTLE DIFFERENT TODAY, AS IF THEY'RE MAKING THEIR APPROACH ON A DIFFERENT COURSE.


OF COURSE, ALL OF YOU KNOW WHEN THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC OFFICIALLY ENDED. IT'S IN THE HISTORY BOOKS.
WHAT MAINSTREAM WARTIME HISTORY FAILS TO SHARE IS THE CARPET BOMBING OF LITTLE OKINOHA ISLAND BY THE U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS ON OCTOBER 20, 1945.
WHILE MOST OF IT REMAINS SECRET EVEN AT THIS LATE DATE, ENOUGH OF THE OFFICIAL RECORD HAS BEEN PRIED LOOSE TO CONFIRM THAT ALL OF ITS "GUINEA PIGS" DIED NEAR OKINOHA.
THAT PROBABLY HAS A LOT TO DO WITH THE SECRET AMERICAN "NUE" PROJECT.


TODAY OKINOYA ISLAND IS AS BARREN AND LIFELESS AS ANY OTHER LITTLE BOMBED-OUT ISLAND FROM THE FINAL DAYS OF THE WAR.
ENDE

HARD METAL

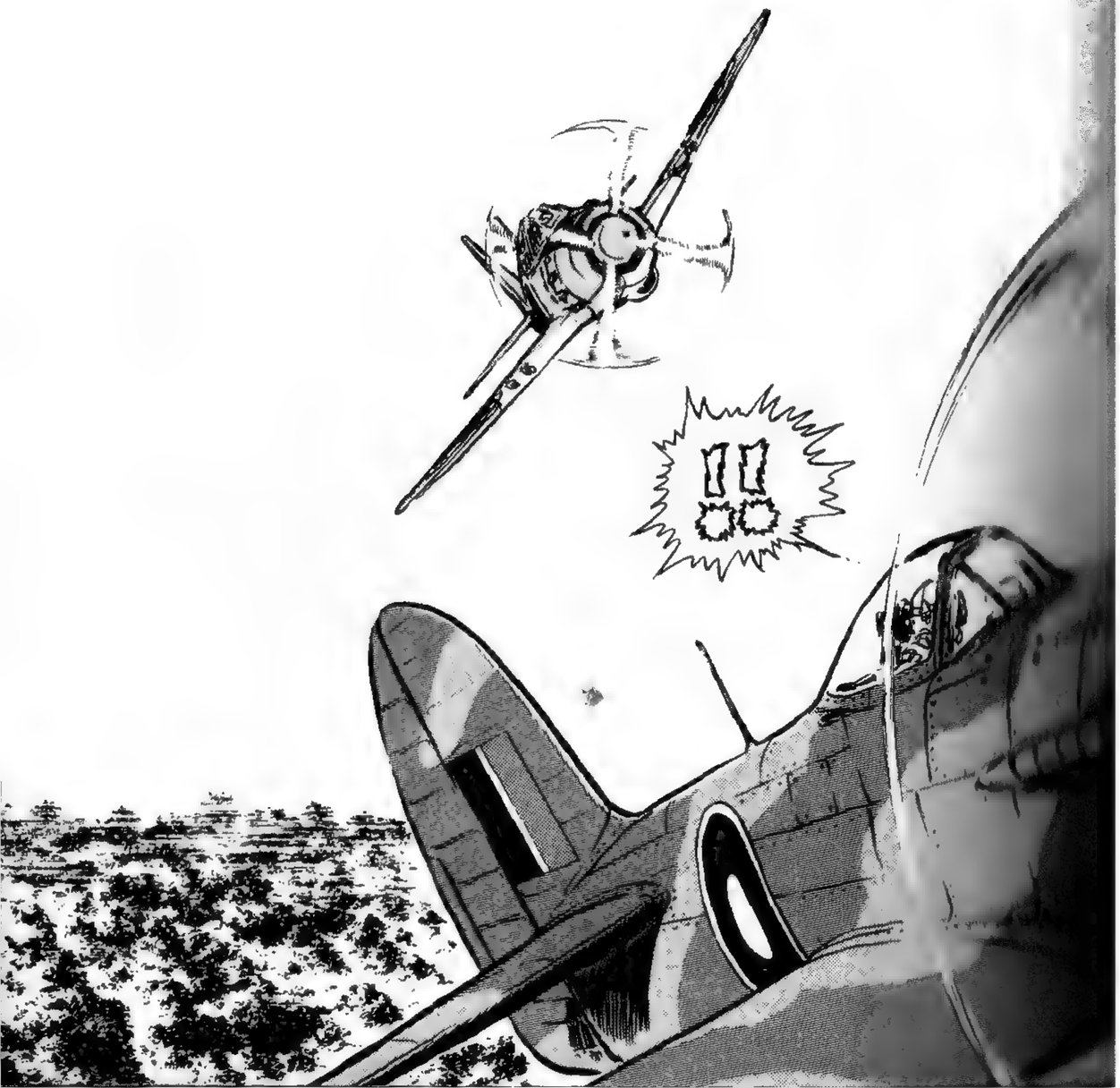
I MADE A BIG MISTAKE WHEN I WAS YOUNG. I CAME TO REGRET IT LATER ....
(!)
WHEN I WAS YOUNG I WANTED TO BE AN ARTIST. INSTEAD I ALLOWED MY FATHER AND OUR FAMILY'S SOCIAL POSITION PRESSURE ME INTO BECOMING THE LATEST PROUD HOWDER HUNTER.
I LOST MY PARTNER, YOU KNOW.
MY WINGMAN WAS KILLED IN ACTION BECAUSE I'M NOWHERE NEAR THE HUNTER AS IS AND WAS THE REST OF MY FAMILY. I HAD TO LEARN TO BE A HUNTER AND IT WAS HARD. TO THEM IT CAME NATURALLY ....
HOWDER, YOU'VE GOT TO QUIT BLAMING YOURSELF FOR WHAT HAPPENED. ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN IN BATTLE. UNPREDICTABILITY IS THE NATURE OF WAR. IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT SO LET IT GO.

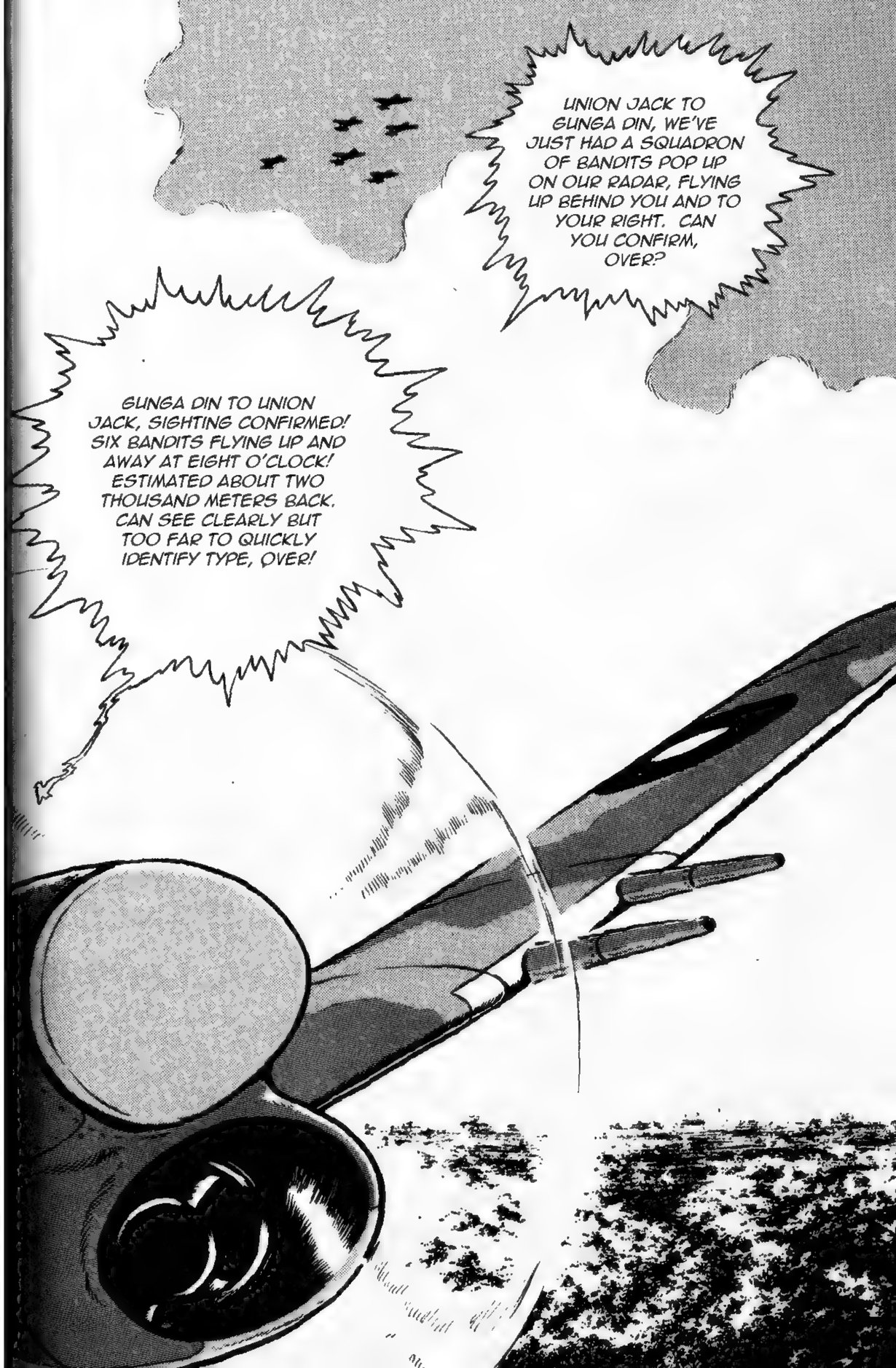

LT. STUART WAS ONLY 21 YEARS OLD. I HAD KNOWN HIM SINCE HE WAS A JUST A LAD. HE ... HE ...
JUST THIS MORNING HE WAS SITTING IN THAT CHAIR OVER THERE, TALKING AND LAUGHING AND COMPLETELY UNAWARE THAT HE WAS GOING TO BE ASHES BY EVENING.
2
IT'S STILL OUT THERE, SOMEWHERE. I WILL FIND IT, AND I WILL SHOOT IT DOWN FOR YOUR SAKE, STUART ... AND MINE ....
HE WASN'T SHOT DOWN BY A ZERO EITHER. IT WAS A NEWER NIP PLANE, ONE OF THE ONES THAT LOOKS AMERICAN, WITH AN AIR-COOLED ENGINE.
LV
LV

BURMA 1945

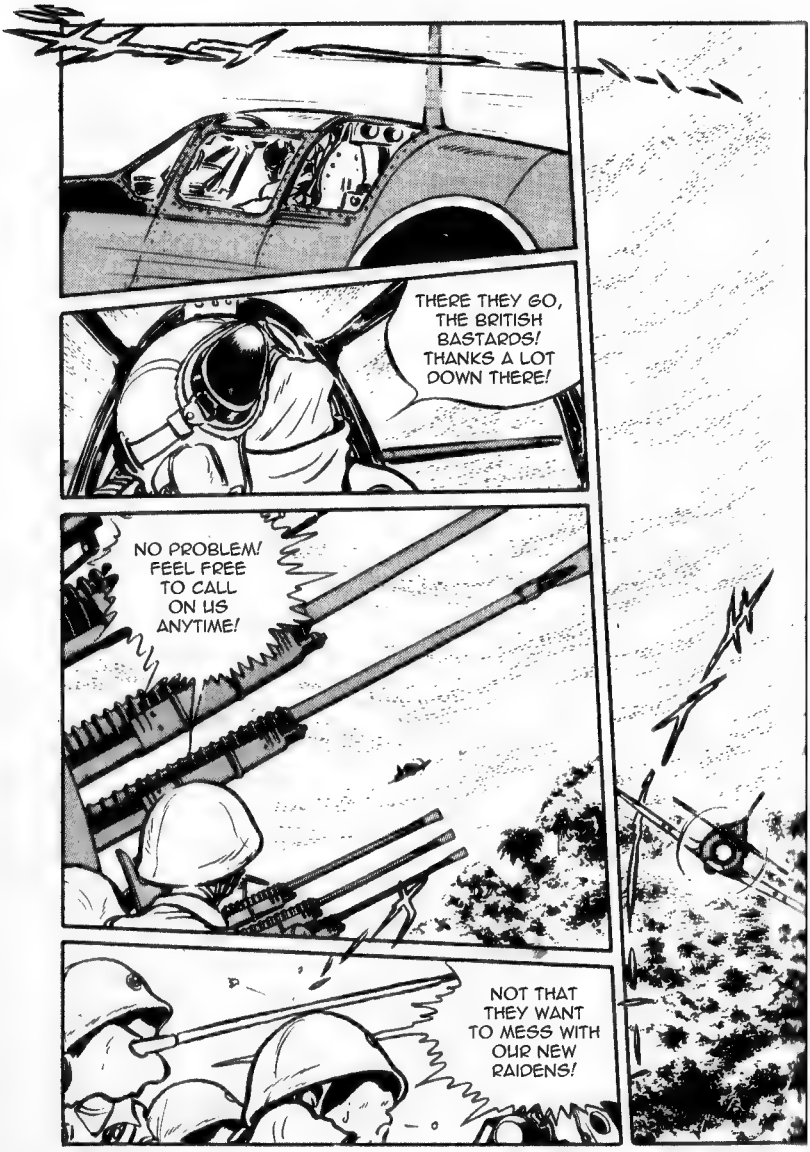
THIS IS UNION JACK TO GUNGA DIN, OVER. DO YOU READ US, OVER?
THIS IS GUNGA DIN TO UNION JACK, GUNGA DIN TO UNION JACK. AM HAVING TO FLY LOW BECAUSE THE FUCKING VISIBILITY STINKS! MIST EVERYWHERE OVER THE JUNGLE, MAKING FOR EXTREMELY POOR VISIBILITY, OVER!

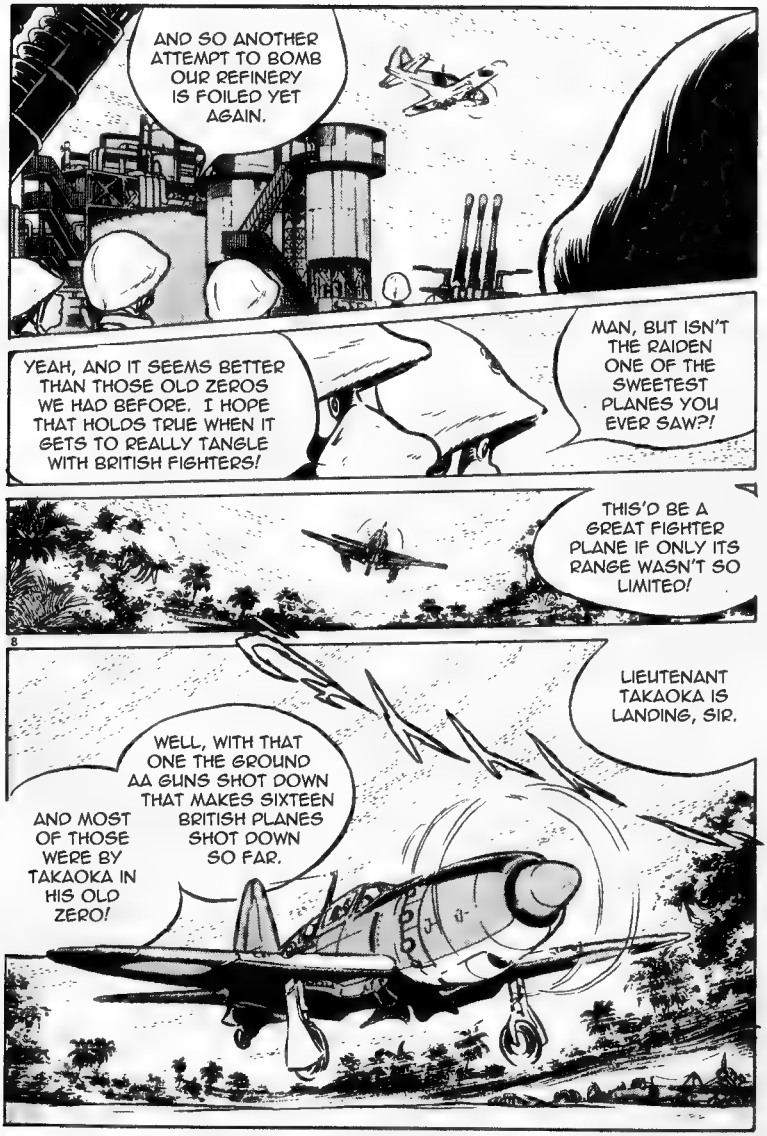
THE SILENT SUN

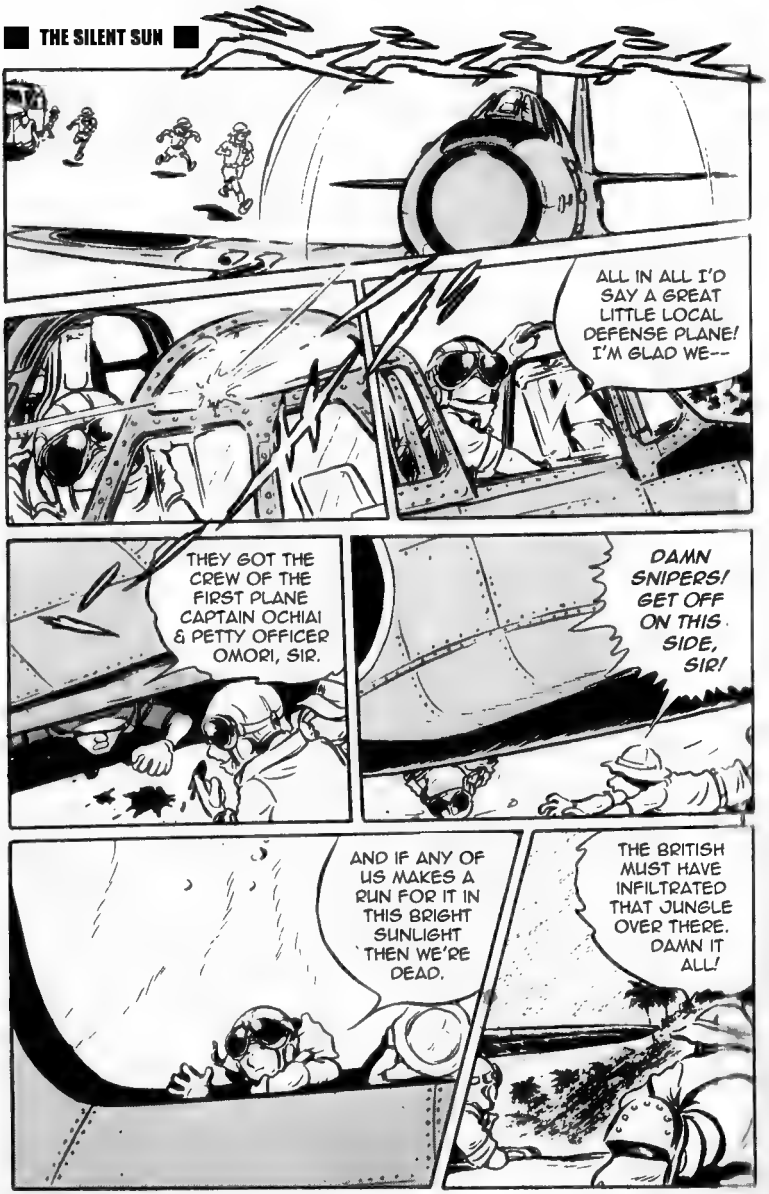


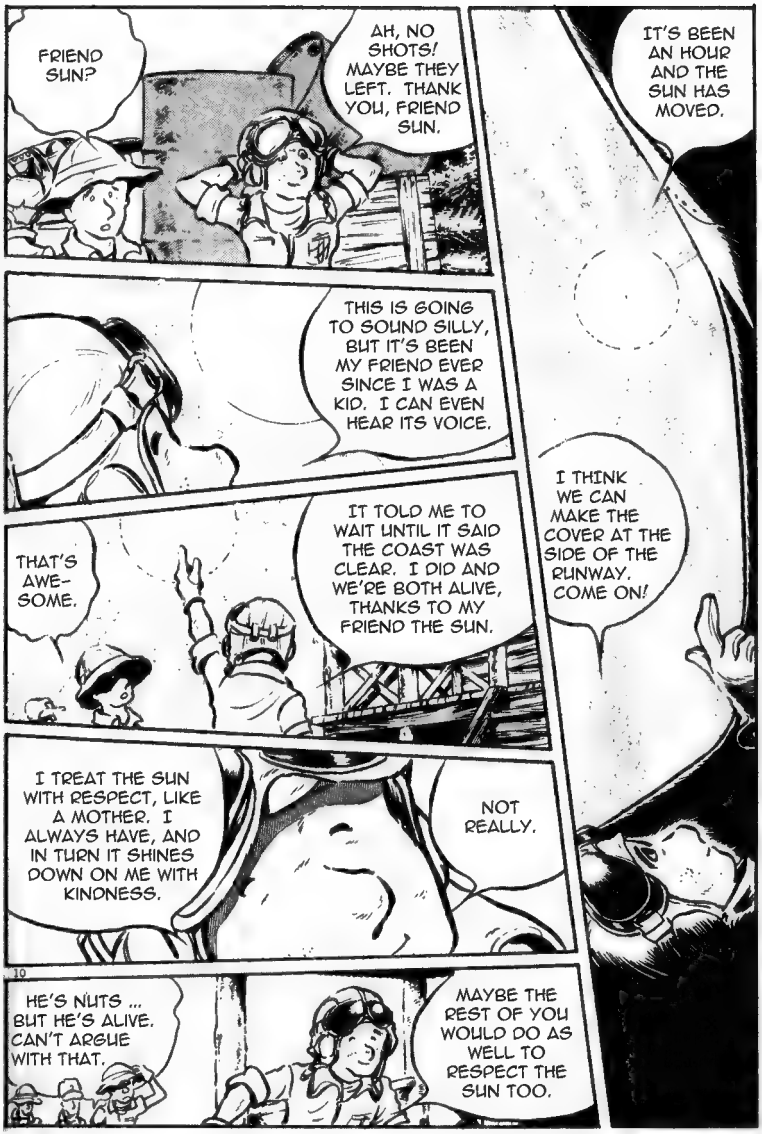

UNION JACK TO GUNGA DIN, WE'VE JUST HAD A SQUADRON OF BANDITS POP UP ON OUR RADAR, FLYING UP BEHIND YOU AND TO YOUR RIGHT. CAN YOU CONFIRM, OVER?
GUNGA DIN TO UNION JACK, SIGHTING CONFIRMED! SIX BANDITS FLYING UP AND AWAY AT EIGHT O'CLOCK! ESTIMATED ABOUT TWO THOUSAND METERS BACK. CAN SEE CLEARLY BUT TOO FAR TO QUICKLY IDENTIFY TYPE, OVER!

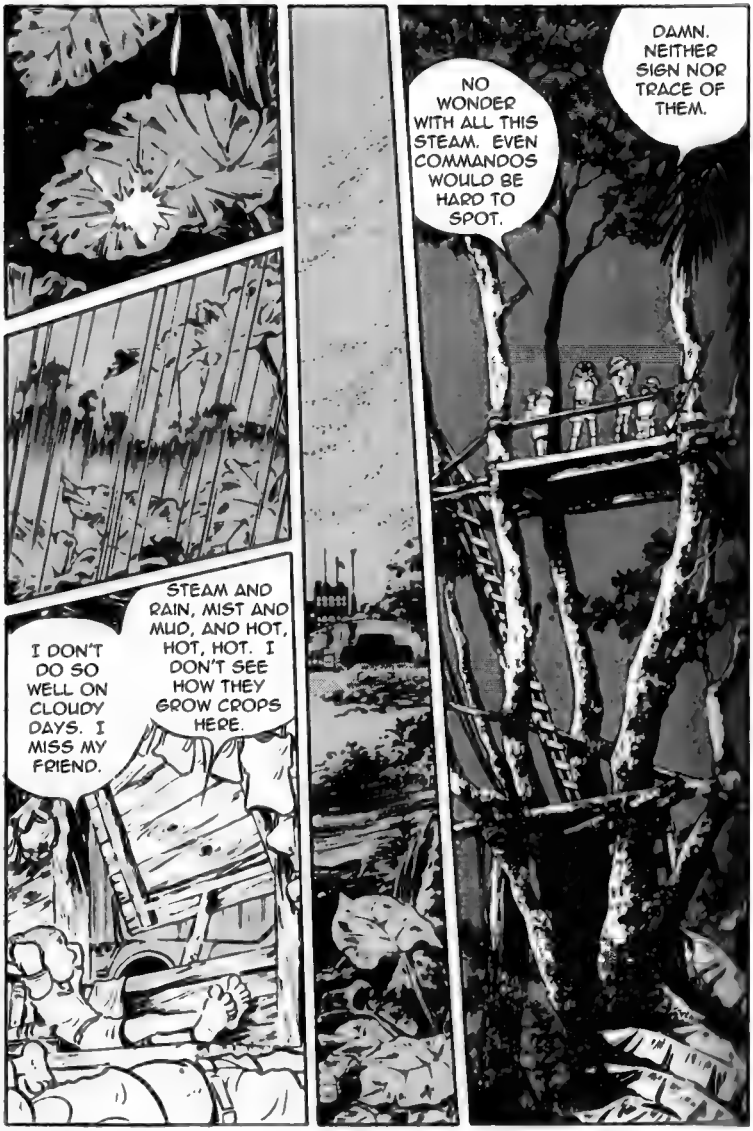
YEAGER
BLOODY HELL! IT'S THOSE NEW PLANES AGAIN, AND WE'RE TAKING GROUND FIRE TOO!!
ROGER, GUNGA DIN! GET YOUR PLANES OUT OF THERE!

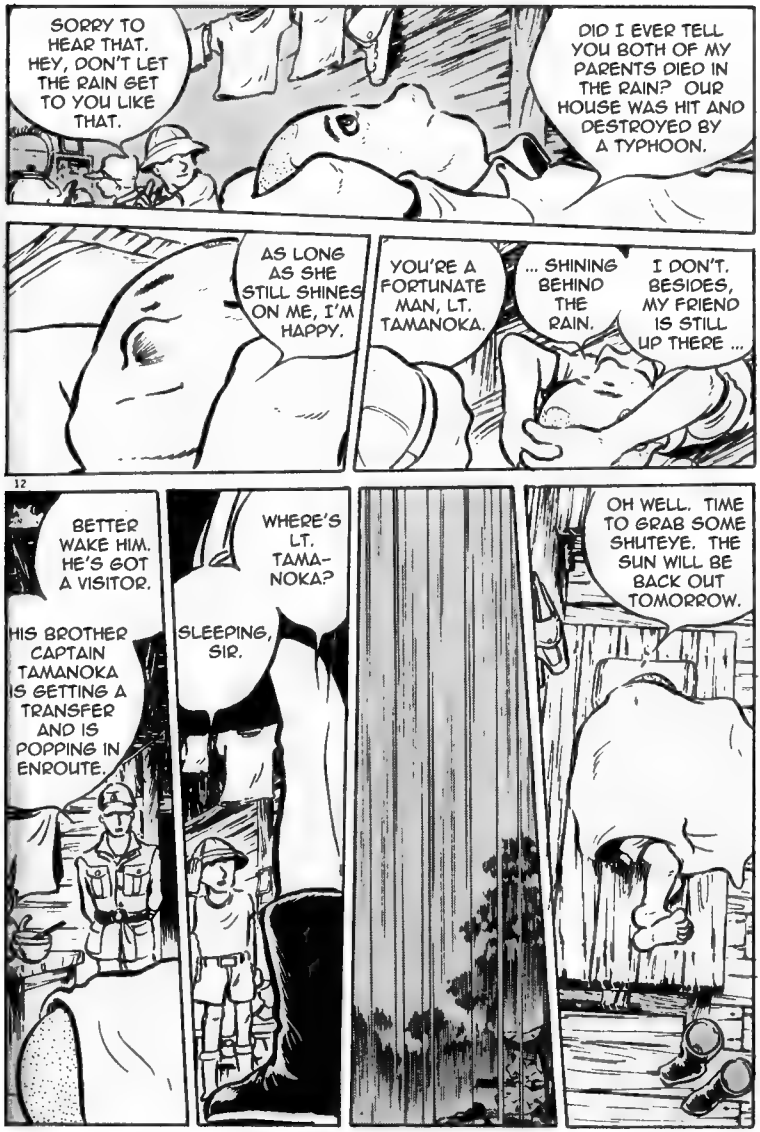

THERE THEY GO, THE BRITISH BASTARDS! THANKS A LOT DOWN THERE!
NO PROBLEM! FEEL FREE TO CALL ON US ANYTIME!
NOT THAT THEY WANT TO MESS WITH OUR NEW RAIDENS!


AND SO ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO BOMB OUR REFINERY IS FOILED YET AGAIN.
YEAH, AND IT SEEMS BETTER THAN THOSE OLD ZEROS WE HAD BEFORE. I HOPE THAT HOLDS TRUE WHEN IT GETS TO REALLY TANGLE WITH BRITISH FIGHTERS!
MAN, BUT ISN'T THE RAIDEN ONE OF THE SWEETEST PLANES YOU EVER SAW?!
THIS'D BE A GREAT FIGHTER PLANE IF ONLY ITS RANGE WASN'T SO LIMITED!
8
LIEUTENANT TAKAOKA IS LANDING, SIR.
WELL, WITH THAT ONE THE GROUND AA GUNS SHOT DOWN THAT MAKES SIXTEEN BRITISH PLANES SHOT DOWN SO FAR.
AND MOST OF THOSE WERE BY TAKAOKA IN HIS OLD ZERO!


ALL IN ALL I'D SAY A GREAT LITTLE LOCAL DEFENSE PLANE! I'M GLAD WE--
THEY GOT THE CREW OF THE FIRST PLANE CAPTAIN OCHIAI & PETTY OFFICER OMORI, SIR.
DAMN SNIPERS! GET OFF ON THIS SIDE, SIR!
AND IF ANY OF US MAKES A RUN FOR IT IN THIS BRIGHT SUNLIGHT THEN WE'RE DEAD.
THE BRITISH MUST HAVE INFILTRATED THAT JUNGLE OVER THERE. DAMN IT ALL!


FRIEND SUN?
AH, NO SHOTS! MAYBE THEY LEFT. THANK YOU, FRIEND SUN.
IT'S BEEN AN HOUR AND THE SUN HAS MOVED.
THIS IS GOING TO SOUND SILLY, BUT IT'S BEEN MY FRIEND EVER SINCE I WAS A KID. I CAN EVEN HEAR ITS VOICE.
I THINK WE CAN MAKE THE COVER AT THE SIDE OF THE RUNWAY. COME ON!
IT TOLD ME TO WAIT UNTIL IT SAID THE COAST WAS CLEAR. I DID AND WE'RE BOTH ALIVE, THANKS TO MY FRIEND THE SUN.
THAT'S AWE-SOME.
I TREAT THE SUN WITH RESPECT, LIKE A MOTHER. I ALWAYS HAVE, AND IN TURN IT SHINES DOWN ON ME WITH KINDNESS.
NOT REALLY.
10
HE'S NUTS ... BUT HE'S ALIVE. CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT.
MAYBE THE REST OF YOU WOULD DO AS WELL TO RESPECT THE SUN TOO.


I DON'T DO SO WELL ON CLOUDY DAYS. I MISS MY FRIEND.
STEAM AND RAIN, MIST AND MUD, AND HOT, HOT, HOT. I DON'T SEE HOW THEY GROW CROPS HERE.
NO WONDER WITH ALL THIS STEAM. EVEN COMMANDOS WOULD BE HARD TO SPOT.
DAMN. NEITHER SIGN NOR TRACE OF THEM.

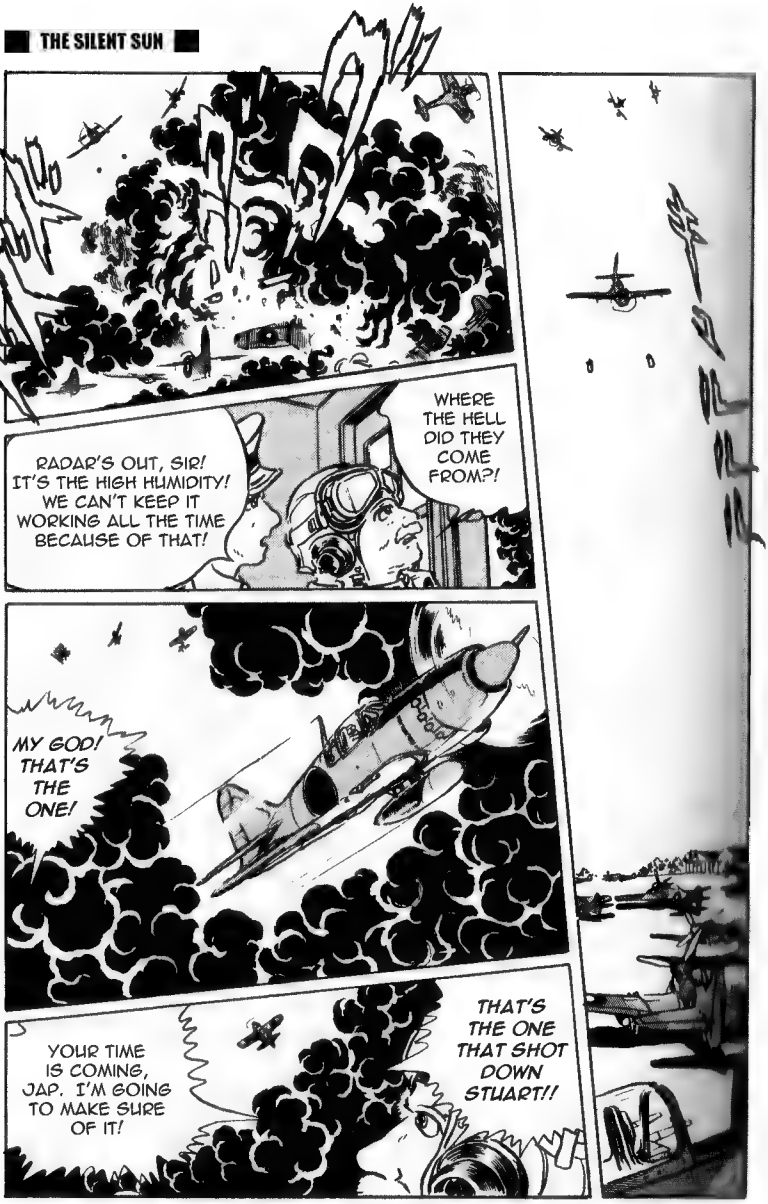

SORRY TO HEAR THAT. HEY, DON'T LET THE RAIN GET TO YOU LIKE THAT.
DID I EVER TELL YOU BOTH OF MY PARENTS DIED IN THE RAIN? OUR HOUSE WAS HIT AND DESTROYED BY A TYPHOON.
AS LONG AS SHE STILL SHINES ON ME, I'M HAPPY.
YOU'RE A FORTUNATE MAN, LT. TAMANOKA.
... SHINING BEHIND THE RAIN.
I DON'T. BESIDES, MY FRIEND IS STILL UP THERE ...
12
BETTER WAKE HIM. HE'S GOT A VISITOR.
HIS BROTHER CAPTAIN TAMANOKA IS GETTING A TRANSFER AND IS POPPING IN ENROUTE.
WHERE'S LT. TAMA-NOKA?
SLEEPING, SIR.
OH WELL. TIME TO GRAB SOME SHUTEYE. THE SUN WILL BE BACK OUT TOMORROW.

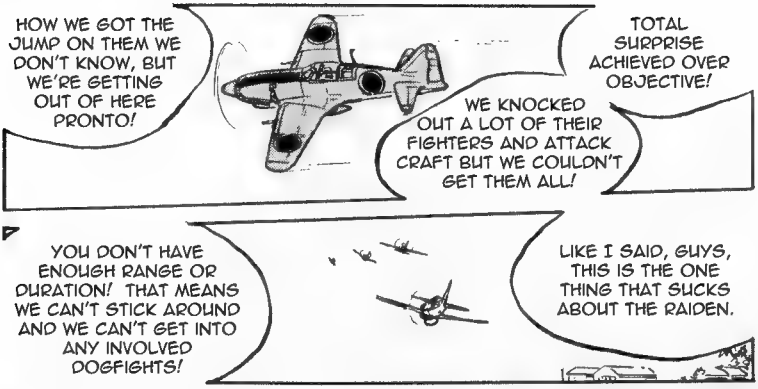
TONIGHT. BET YOU'LL BE GLAD TO SEE HIM.
HE IS? WHEN'S HE ARRIVING?
TONIGHT?! OH, NO ....
THE RAIN ....
HERE HE IS!
A SNIPER WOULD HAVE TO BE CRAZY TO BE OUT IN RAIN LIKE THIS.
MAYBE THE RAIN IS TOO MUCH. MAYBE IT'LL STEAM UP THAT SNIPER'S SCOPE. MAYBE ...
HAS ANYONE RADIOED MY BROTHER TO WARN HIM?

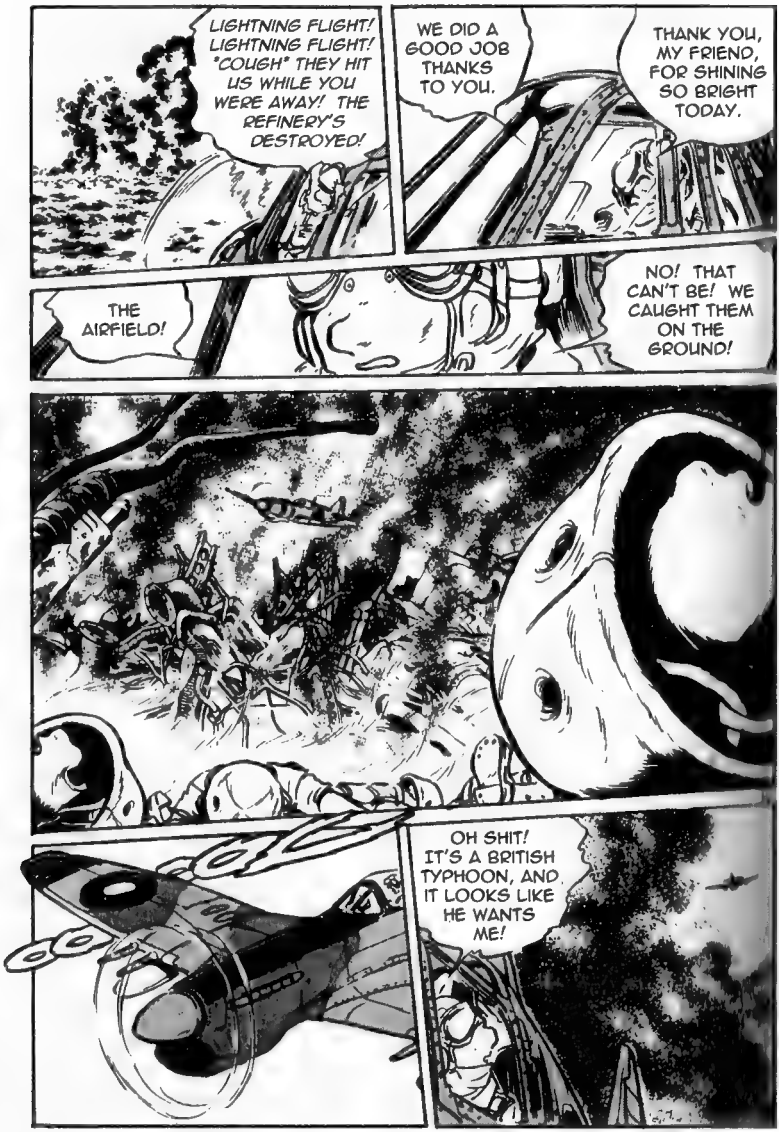
THUNK!!!

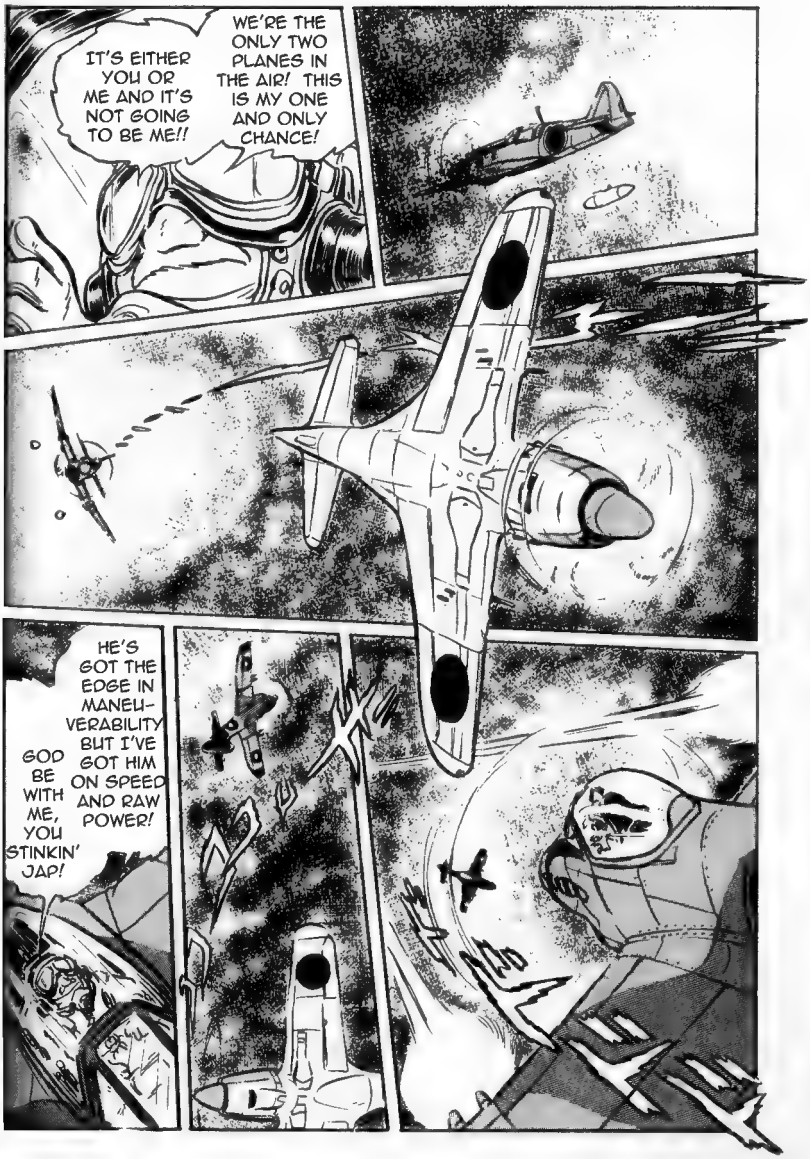
NO!!!!!
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME IN THE RAIN! IT'S LIKE WITH MOM AND DAD!! YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME IN THE RAIN!!!
DAMMIT!

ABOUT FIFTEEN MINUTES, SIR. YOU'VE STILL GOT TIME.
SO WHEN ARE WE SUPPOSED TO LEAVE AND GO JOIN UP WITH THOSE AMERICAN BOMBERS?
JUST A BACKFIRE. DON'T WORRY, GROUP CAPTAIN. IF IT WERE A REAL THREAT IT'D BE ON RADAR.
WHAT WAS THAT? IT SOUNDED LIKE AN EXPLOSION.
16
HEY, YOU HEAR THOSE ENGINES INCOMING? DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A SPIT OR A TYPHOON.
THAT'S THEIR ONLY DRAWBACK AS FAR AS WE KNOW. DAMN LOT OF GOOD IT DOES US.
THEY'RE DAMN GOOD FOR WHAT THEY ARE BUT THEY DON'T HAVE THE RANGE OF THEIR OLD ZEROS.
THESE NEW PLANES OF THEIRS, THE JACKS -- OR "RAIDENS," AS THEY CALL THEM.
MAYBE IT'S THAT BEAUFIGHTER ON PATROL COMING BACK IN?


WHERE THE HELL DID THEY COME FROM?!
RADAR'S OUT, SIR! IT'S THE HIGH HUMIDITY! WE CAN'T KEEP IT WORKING ALL THE TIME BECAUSE OF THAT!
MY GOD! THAT'S THE ONE!
YOUR TIME IS COMING, JAP. I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE OF IT!
THAT'S THE ONE THAT SHOT DOWN STUART!!


HOW WE GOT THE JUMP ON THEM WE DON'T KNOW, BUT WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE PRONTO!
TOTAL SURPRISE ACHIEVED OVER OBJECTIVE!
WE KNOCKED OUT A LOT OF THEIR FIGHTERS AND ATTACK CRAFT BUT WE COULDN'T GET THEM ALL!
YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH RANGE OR DURATION! THAT MEANS WE CAN'T STICK AROUND AND WE CAN'T GET INTO ANY INVOLVED DOGFIGHTS!
LIKE I SAID, GUYS, THIS IS THE ONE THING THAT SUCKS ABOUT THE RAIDEN.
IS EVERYONE ALL RIGHT, GROUP CAPTAIN HOWDER?
I'VE GOT BARELY ENOUGH OPERATIONAL PLANES LEFT TO PROTECT THE FIELD! GOOD THING THE RUNWAY'S STILL USEABLE!
BLIMEY! TO BE CAUGHT WITH OUR PANTS COMPELETELY DOWN LIKE THIS!!
THIS WAS PAYBACK FOR THOSE SNIPERS WE'VE HAD PLANTED AROUND THEIR AIRFIELD. TETE-A-TETE AND ALL OF THAT. WELL I'M TIRED OF ALL THAT! WE NEED TO FINISH THE JOB ONCE AND FOR ALL!
YES SIR. LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE. WITH THEM ATTACKING US THEY'RE WIDE OPEN TO THE AMERICANS.
18
DON'T FORGET, I'VE GOT A PERSONAL STAKE IN THIS. I WON'T COME BACK UNTIL I'VE SHOT DOWN THE JACK THAT GOT STUART OR I'M SHOT DOWN!
I'VE SAID THIS BEFORE AND I'LL SAY IT AGAIN. YOU'RE A BRAVE MAN, JOHN STERLING HOWDER, TO DO WHAT YOU CAN WITH WHAT YOU'VE GOT.
EIGHT AIRCRAFT, INCLUDING YOURS. THAT'S ALL WE'VE GOT LEFT THAT'S OPERATIONAL AFTER THIS LITTLE GARDEN PARTY.


LIGHTNING FLIGHT! LIGHTNING FLIGHT! *COUGH* THEY HIT US WHILE YOU WERE AWAY! THE REFINERY'S DESTROYED!
WE DID A GOOD JOB THANKS TO YOU.
THANK YOU, MY FRIEND, FOR SHINING SO BRIGHT TODAY.
THE AIRFIELD!
NO! THAT CAN'T BE! WE CAUGHT THEM ON THE GROUND!
OH SHIT! IT'S A BRITISH TYPHOON, AND IT LOOKS LIKE HE WANTS ME!


IT'S EITHER YOU OR ME AND IT'S NOT GOING TO BE ME!!
WE'RE THE ONLY TWO PLANES IN THE AIR! THIS IS MY ONE AND ONLY CHANCE!
GOD BE WITH ME, YOU STINKIN' JAP!
HE'S GOT THE EDGE IN MANEU-VERABILITY BUT I'VE GOT HIM ON SPEED AND RAW POWER!

KABOOOOM!!

FRIEND! AUSTRALIAN COMMANDOS!
FRIEND OR FOE?!
ALL DEAD BUT US TWO, AND WE'RE OUT OF AMMO TOO, GROUP CAPTAIN! WE'VE BEEN LIVIN' OFF THE LAND!
I SEE ONLY TWO OF YOU! WHERE'S THE REST OF YOUR UNIT?!?
22
NO RUDDY CHOICE! THAT AND STEALIN' FROM THE NIPS WHATEVER AND WHENEVER WE CAN! C'MON, WE'LL GET YOU LOOSE AND YOU CAN COME WITH US!
YOU MEAN YOU'VE BEEN HIDING OUT HERE ALL OF THIS TIME, SOLDIER?
HRMPH! THE HUNTER AND THE LION TOOK EACH OTHER OUT! OH WELL ...
I DID MY BEST. I'VE NOTHING TO BE ASHAMED ABOUT. LET'S JUST HOPE IT'S MY PEOPLE WHO PICK ME UP.

SHIT!
GIT DOWN, ALL OF YOU! IT'S THEIR RUDDY "VOLUNTEER ARMY!"
THANK YOU BOTH, GENTLEMEN. I'D HATE TO BE A P.O.W.
WE'RE LOSING THE SUN! WE'LL HAVE TO CALL OFF THE SEARCH WHEN IT DOES!
THE BRITISHER CAN'T HAVE GONE FAR GIVEN HOW CLOSE HIS PLANE CRASHED!
HAD I NOT GOTTEN LUCKY I MIGHT HAVE DIED, BLINDED BY MY DESIRE FOR REVENGE. YOU FOUGHT NOBLY AND TO THE END. I RESPECT YOU FOR THAT, EVEN THOUGH WE WERE ENEMIES. TAKE CARE, SAMURAI.
TO WHO-EVER YOU ARE AND WHEREVER YOU ARE, I WISH YOU WELL.
MY ENEMY MAY HAVE BEEN A A JAP BUT HE EARNED MY RESPECT TODAY. I WONDER IF HE WAS A SAMURAI ....

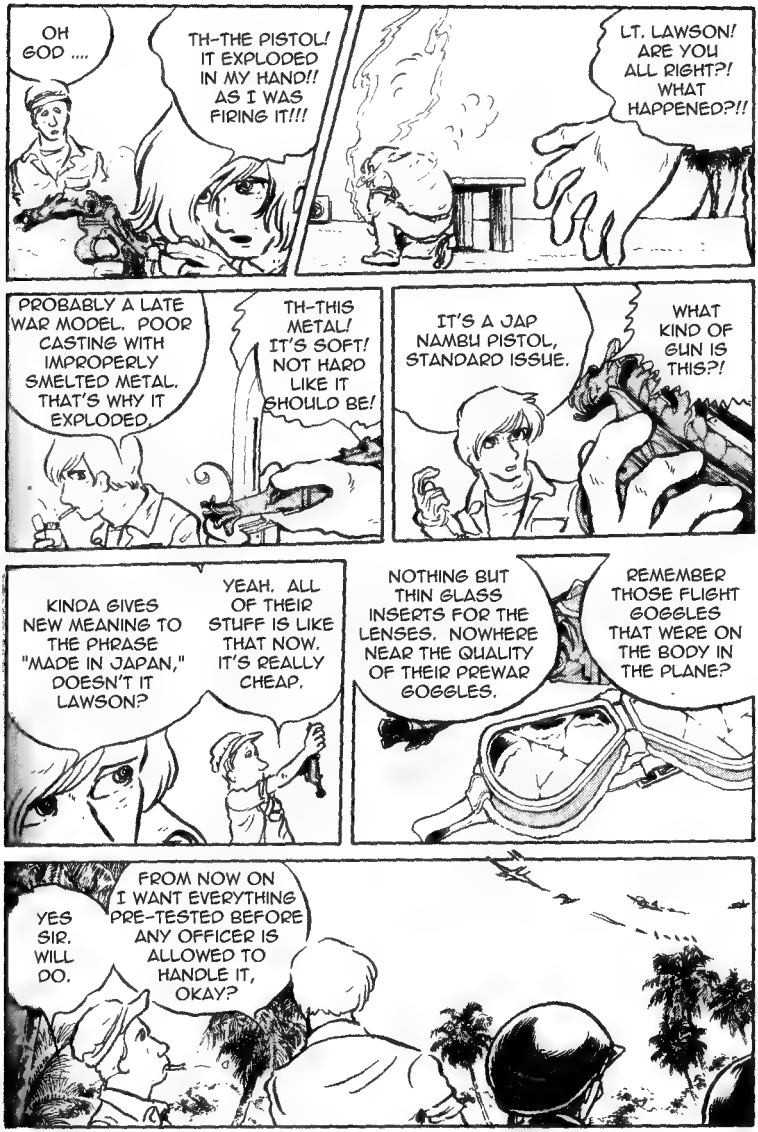
RAF GROUP CAPTAIN JOHN STERLING HOWDER, A SON OF A FAMILY OF HUNTERS WHO SERVED THE EMPIRE ABLY BOTH IN AFRICA AND INDIA IN COLONIAL TIMES, WAS EVENTUALLY RESCUED AND RETURNED HOME TO A HERO'S WELCOME. THE FIRST CAR HE BOUGHT IN CIVILIAN LIFE WAS A HIGH-END JAPANESE IMPORT SEDAN. HE DIED PEACEFULLY IN HIS SLEEP IN 1980.

LT. MITSUO TAMANOKA IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED IN ACTION DURING THE FINAL MONTHS OF JAPANESE ACTIONS IN BURMA IN 1945. HIS BODY WAS NEVER RECOVERED.

ENDE

HARD METAL

RAM THE CLIP HOME!
RAPID FIRE!!
十四年式


OH GOD ....
TH-THE PISTOL! IT EXPLODED IN MY HAND!! AS I WAS FIRING IT!!!
LT. LAWSON! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?! WHAT HAPPENED?!!
PROBABLY A LATE WAR MODEL. POOR CASTING WITH IMPROPERLY SMELTED METAL. THAT'S WHY IT EXPLODED.
TH-THIS METAL! IT'S SOFT! NOT HARD LIKE IT SHOULD BE!
IT'S A JAP NAMBU PISTOL, STANDARD ISSUE.
WHAT KIND OF GUN IS THIS?!
KINDA GIVES NEW MEANING TO THE PHRASE "MADE IN JAPAN," DOESN'T IT LAWSON?
YEAH. ALL OF THEIR STUFF IS LIKE THAT NOW. IT'S REALLY CHEAP.
NOTHING BUT THIN GLASS INSERTS FOR THE LENSES. NOWHERE NEAR THE QUALITY OF THEIR PREWAR GOGGLES.
REMEMBER THOSE FLIGHT GOGGLES THAT WERE ON THE BODY IN THE PLANE?
YES SIR. WILL DO.
FROM NOW ON I WANT EVERYTHING PRE-TESTED BEFORE ANY OFFICER IS ALLOWED TO HANDLE IT, OKAY?

AH! A "FRANK" OR TYPE 4 FIGHTER! OR "HAYATE" AS THE JAPS WOULD SAY. I WAS HOPING WE'D GET ONE OF THOSE!
OF COUSE NEITHER HE NOR THE REST OF THE JAP MILITARY HAVE ANY IDEA WE'RE HERE OR WHAT WE'RE DOING ON LOWBAND ISLAND.
LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOING TO CRASH NEAR THE BEACH.

PHANTOM NO. 800

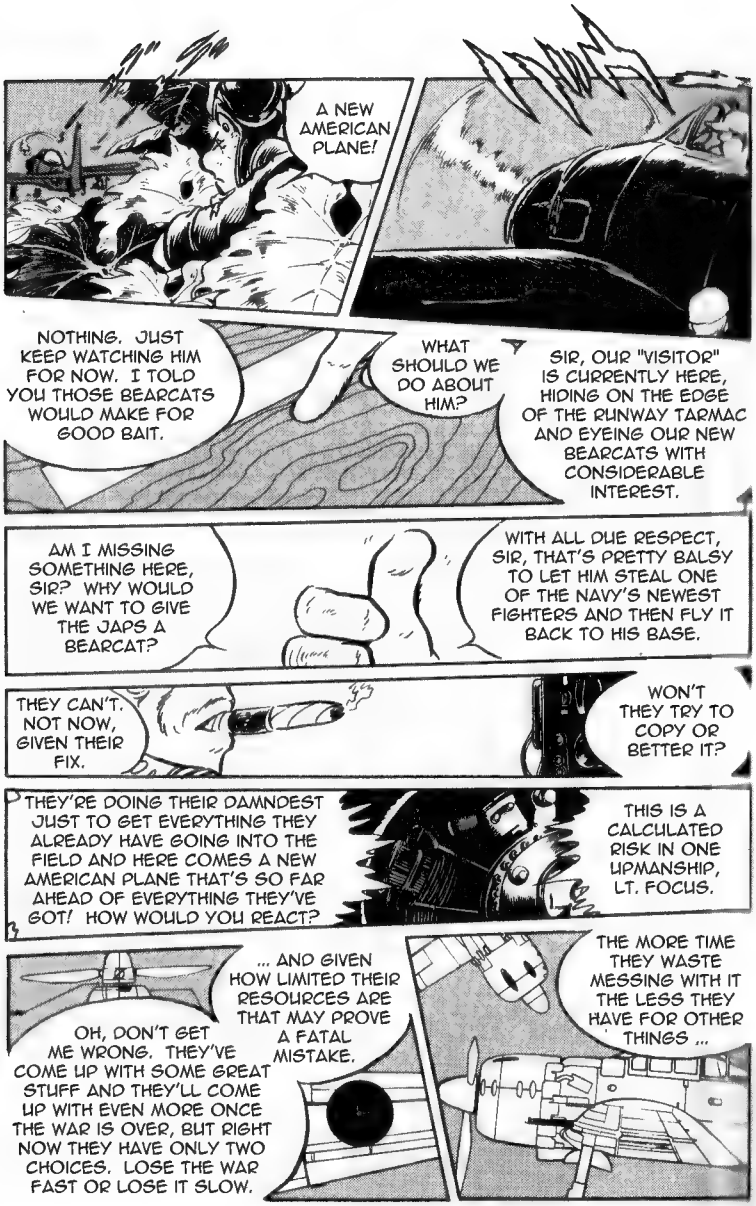
RHAPSODY IN FLIGHT

LAWSON! GET EVERYBODY READY! FIRE CREW, ON THE DOUBLE!

OPERATION PEEPING TOM STANDING ORDERS! MOVE IT, PEOPLE!!

... OOOHHH ... UUHHH ... DAMN OLD AIRPLANE! .... AAAAAHHHHH ... MAYBE IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN BETTER IF I HADN'T SURVIVED THE CRASH! .... UNNGGHHH ....

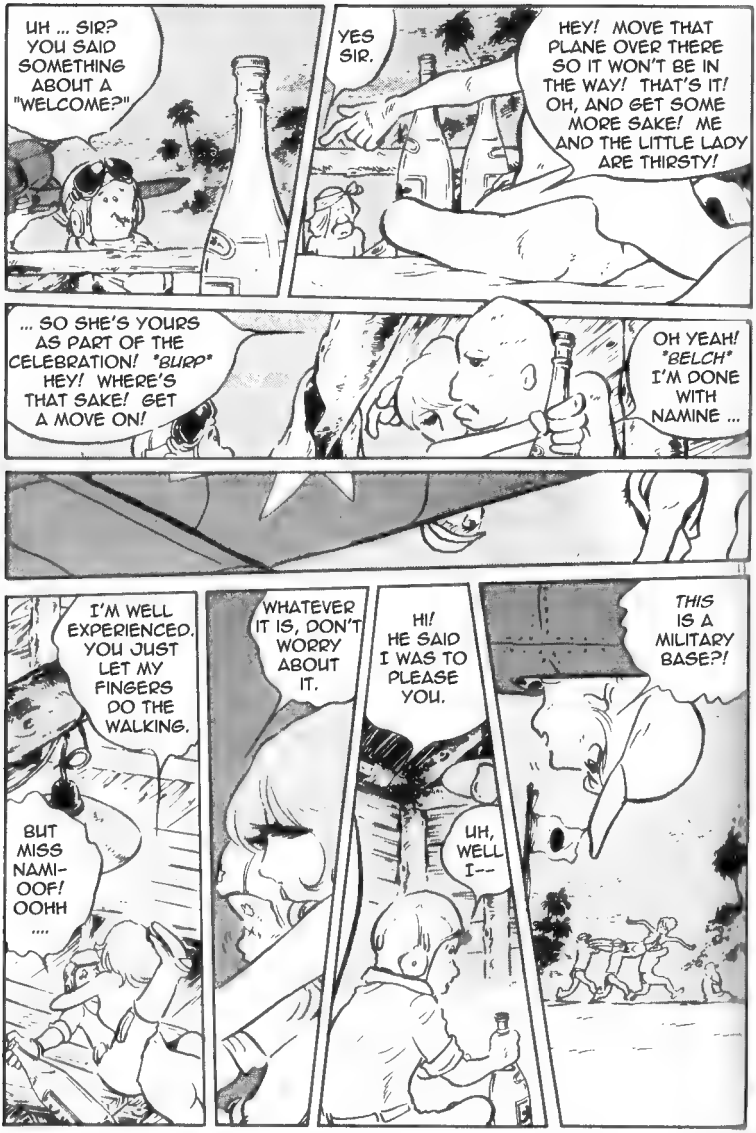
EASY, CHIEF. IT'S JUST GLASS, AND MADE AS THIN AS THEY CAN MAKE IT. NOT PLEXIGLASS OR OTHER FORM OF ACRYLIC LIKE OURS. HMMM!
HEY! WATCH WHAT YOU'RE DOING, DUMBASS! HOW CAN WE GATHER INTELLIGENCE ON THIS SHIT IF YOU FUCKIN' BREAK IT?!
IT'S JUST A PIECE OF PLASTIC COATED WOOD.
AND THIS IS WHAT PASSES FOR COCKPIT ARMOR IN NEW JAP PLANES.
FUCKIN' DANGEROUS, THAT'S WHAT I MAKE OF IT, SIR. ARE THEY REALLY THAT BAD OFF? BAMBOO FUEL LINE SPLICES, EXTRA-THIN GLASS, AND SOFT GUN METAL? SHEESH.
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THAT, CHIEF?
AND CHECK OUT THESE HOLLOWED-OUT BAMBOO SPLICES ON THE FUEL LINES!


A NEW AMERICAN PLANE!
SIR, OUR "VISITOR" IS CURRENTLY HERE, HIDING ON THE EDGE OF THE RUNWAY TARMAC AND EYEING OUR NEW BEARCATS WITH CONSIDERABLE INTEREST.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT HIM?
NOTHING. JUST KEEP WATCHING HIM FOR NOW. I TOLD YOU THOSE BEARCATS WOULD MAKE FOR GOOD BAIT.
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, THAT'S PRETTY BALSY TO LET HIM STEAL ONE OF THE NAVY'S NEWEST FIGHTERS AND THEN FLY IT BACK TO HIS BASE.
AM I MISSING SOMETHING HERE, SIR? WHY WOULD WE WANT TO GIVE THE JAPS A BEARCAT?
WON'T THEY TRY TO COPY OR BETTER IT?
THEY CAN'T. NOT NOW, GIVEN THEIR FIX.
THIS IS A CALCULATED RISK IN ONE UPMANSHIP, LT. FOCUS.
THEY'RE DOING THEIR DAMNDEST JUST TO GET EVERYTHING THEY ALREADY HAVE GOING INTO THE FIELD AND HERE COMES A NEW AMERICAN PLANE THAT'S SO FAR AHEAD OF EVERYTHING THEY'VE GOT! HOW WOULD YOU REACT?
THE MORE TIME THEY WASTE MESSING WITH IT THE LESS THEY HAVE FOR OTHER THINGS ...
... AND GIVEN HOW LIMITED THEIR RESOURCES ARE THAT MAY PROVE A FATAL MISTAKE.
OH, DON'T GET ME WRONG. THEY'VE COME UP WITH SOME GREAT STUFF AND THEY'LL COME UP WITH EVEN MORE ONCE THE WAR IS OVER, BUT RIGHT NOW THEY HAVE ONLY TWO CHOICES. LOSE THE WAR FAST OR LOSE IT SLOW.

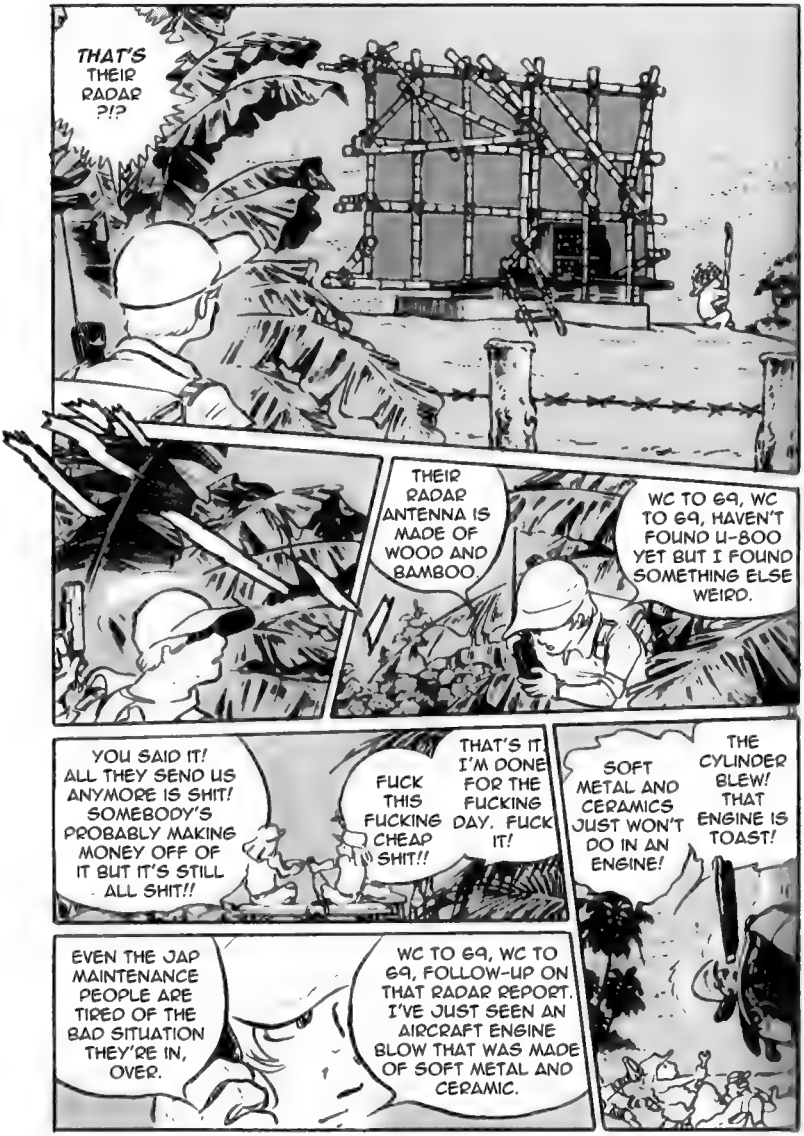
THANK YOU, SIR. I'LL BE PRAYING, BELIEVE ME.
YOU KNOW THAT TAGGING ALONG FOR THE RIDE IS A GREATER RISK IF THEY CATCH YOU. GOOD LUCK, LIEUTENANT.
A COFFEE BREAK?! WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO ARGUE MY LUCK! HERE GOES!
A TRAINING MANUAL?! OH WELL! GOOD THING I KNOW HOW TO READ ENGLISH!
F8F BEARCAT
CAREFUL, CAREFUL, DON'T LET THEM HEAR YOU GET IN ....
THE F8F BEARCAT! BY THE GODS, BUT WON'T MY SUPERIORS BE HAPPY TO GET THEIR GREEDY LITTLE HANDS ON THIS!
HEY! LIKE I THOUGHT, THIS IS AN ALL NEW AMERICAN FIGHTER PLANE TYPE!
F8F BEARCAT
GOOD!

DAMN BUT IT'S LOUD IN HERE! NEXT TIME I'LL BRING SOME EARPLUGS!
GOODBYE, SUCKERS!

BUT HE'S CALLING US IN JAPANESE! IT'S OUR MISSING PILOT, SIR!!
AN AMERICAN FIGHTER IS APPROACHING THE AIRFIELD, SIR ...
ESCORT HIM IN, AND IF IT'S REALLY OUR PILOT THEN ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET FOR HIM! HE DESERVES SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR CAPTURING AN AMERICAN PLANE FOR HIS RETURN!
10
FORGIVE ME, BUT I'M NOT DRESSED FOR DUTY RIGHT NOW.
EXCELLENT WORK, FLIGHT SERGEANT! WE'LL GIVE YOU THE BEST WELCOME WE POSSIBLY CAN!
I HAVE RETURNED, SIR, AND I BRING WITH ME A NEW TYPE OF AMERICAN FIGHTER PLANE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE! THE F8F BEARCAT!


UH ... SIR? YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A "WELCOME?"
YES SIR.
HEY! MOVE THAT PLANE OVER THERE SO IT WON'T BE IN THE WAY! THAT'S IT! OH, AND GET SOME MORE SAKE! ME AND THE LITTLE LADY ARE THIRSTY!
... SO SHE'S YOURS AS PART OF THE CELEBRATION! *BURP* HEY! WHERE'S THAT SAKE! GET A MOVE ON!
OH YEAH! *BELCH* I'M DONE WITH NAMINE ...
I'M WELL EXPERIENCED. YOU JUST LET MY FINGERS DO THE WALKING.
BUT MISS NAMI- OOF! OOHH ....
WHATEVER IT IS, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
HI! HE SAID I WAS TO PLEASE YOU.
UH, WELL I--
THIS IS A MILITARY BASE?!

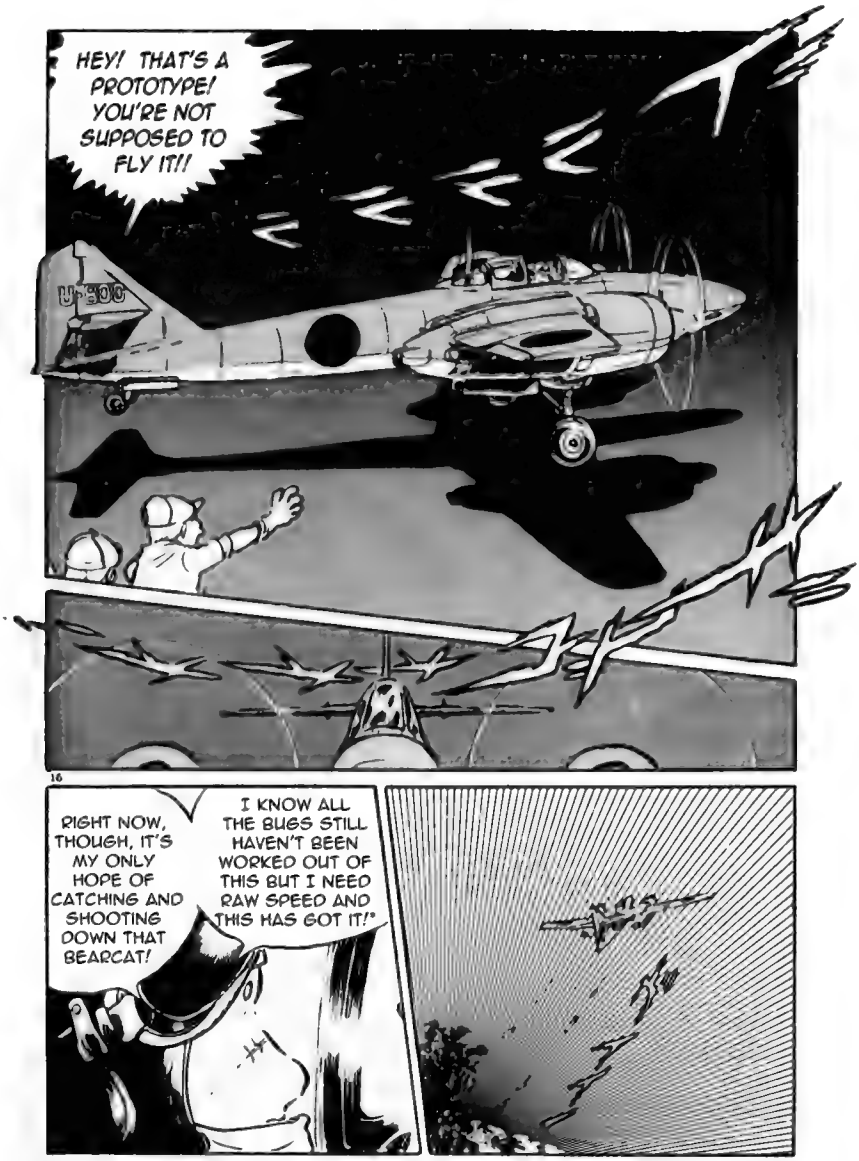
UNNH ...
UNNHHH ...
AAHHH ...
69 TO WC, WE READ YOU LOUD AND CLEAR, OVER.
WC TO 69, WC TO 69, DO YOU READ, OVER?
I SEE COMFORT WOMEN EVERYWHERE WITH JAPS OF ALL RANKS, AND TO TOP IT OFF ALMOST ALL OF THEM SEEM TO ENJOY DOING ... UHH ... IT, OVER.
SIR, THE MEN HERE SEEM TO CARE MORE ABOUT PLEASURING THEMSELVES THAN THE WAR.
NIPPON IMPERIAL ARMY AIR CORPS 800th SQUADRON
YES SIR. I'LL DO MY BEST, SIR.
LIEUTENANT, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE LOOKING FOR THEIR NEW HEAVY FIGHTER, NOT CHECKING OUT THE LOCAL WHOREHOUSE.
WHAT TH ... ??
AS SOON AS I FIND CODE U-800 I'LL LET YOU KNOW. OVER AND OUT.


THAT'S THEIR RADAR ?!?
THEIR RADAR ANTENNA IS MADE OF WOOD AND BAMBOO.
WC TO 69, WC TO 69, HAVEN'T FOUND U-800 YET BUT I FOUND SOMETHING ELSE WEIRD.
YOU SAID IT! ALL THEY SEND US ANYMORE IS SHIT! SOMEBODY'S PROBABLY MAKING MONEY OFF OF IT BUT IT'S STILL ALL SHIT!!
FUCK THIS FUCKING CHEAP SHIT!!
THAT'S IT. I'M DONE FOR THE FUCKING DAY. FUCK IT!
SOFT METAL AND CERAMICS JUST WON'T DO IN AN ENGINE!
THE CYLINDER BLEW! THAT ENGINE IS TOAST!
EVEN THE JAP MAINTENANCE PEOPLE ARE TIRED OF THE BAD SITUATION THEY'RE IN, OVER.
WC TO 69, WC TO 69, FOLLOW-UP ON THAT RADAR REPORT. I'VE JUST SEEN AN AIRCRAFT ENGINE BLOW THAT WAS MADE OF SOFT METAL AND CERAMIC.

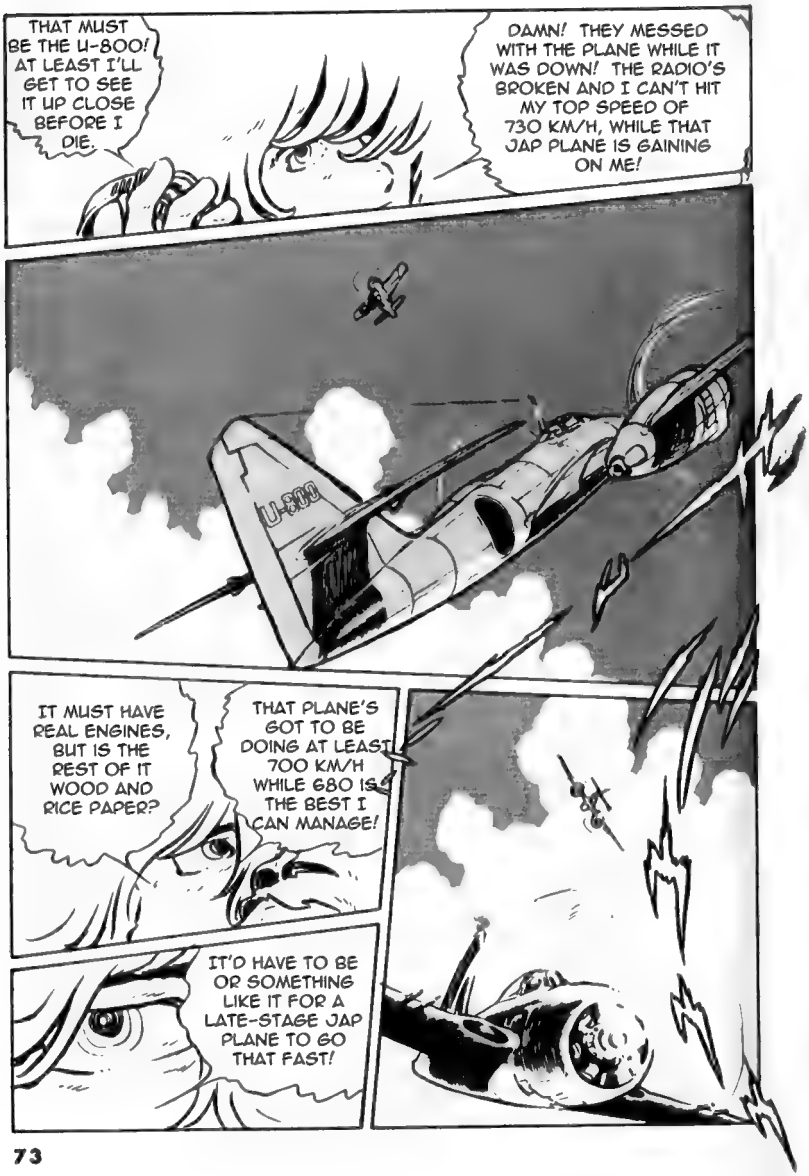
WHATEVER THIS IS, IT STARTED WITH THAT PLANE!
WC TO 69, STILL LOOKING FOR U-800, OVER.
69 TO WC, 69 TO WC, HAVE YOU FOUND U-800 YET? HAVE YOU FOUND U-800 YET, OVER?
YES SIR! RIGHT AWAY, SIR!!
FLIGHT SERGEANT! FLY THAT THING OUT OF HERE!!
EVERYONE ON ALERT! WE'VE GOT AN AMERICAN SPY IN HERE SOME-WHERE!!
ROGER, WC, AND GOOD LUCK! OVER AND OUT!!
WC TO 69, WC TO 69. NO SIGN OF U-800, REPEAT, NO SIGN OF U-800. IF IT'S HERE THEY'VE GOT IT HIDDEN. AM RETURNING TO BASE A.S.A.P., OVER!
14
THERE'S AN AMERICAN SPY IN HERE! FIND HIM! SHOOT ON SIGHT TO KILL!!
ICHI! NI! SAN! YON! GO!*
FORM UP! SOUND OFF!!
OH, POO! IT'S HOT AND DIRTY IN THERE! DO WE HAVE TO?!
NAMINE! I WANT YOU TO ROUND UP THE NURSES AND OTHER LADIES AND TAKE THEM TO THE AIR RAID SHELTER FOR YOU OWN SAFETY!

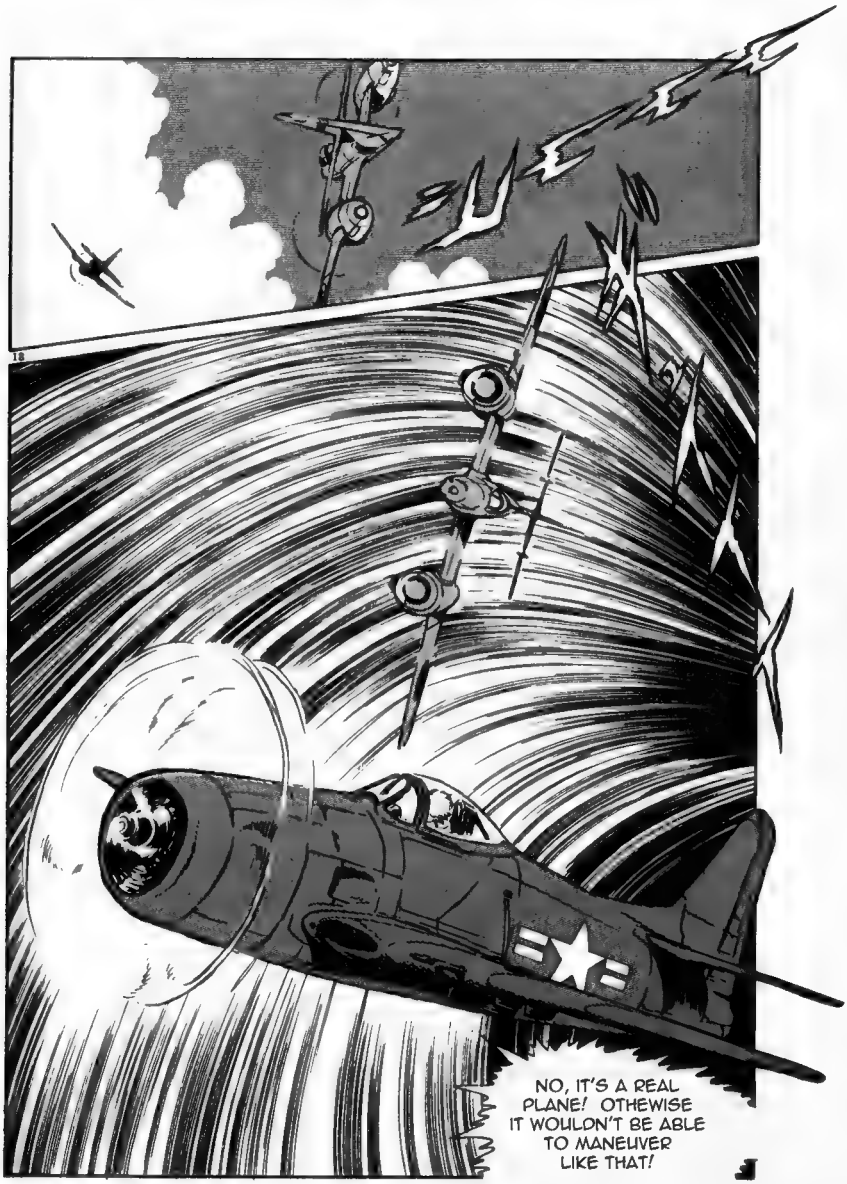
(*) JAPANESE NUMBERS. ICHI=1, NI=2, SAN=3, YON=4, GO=5

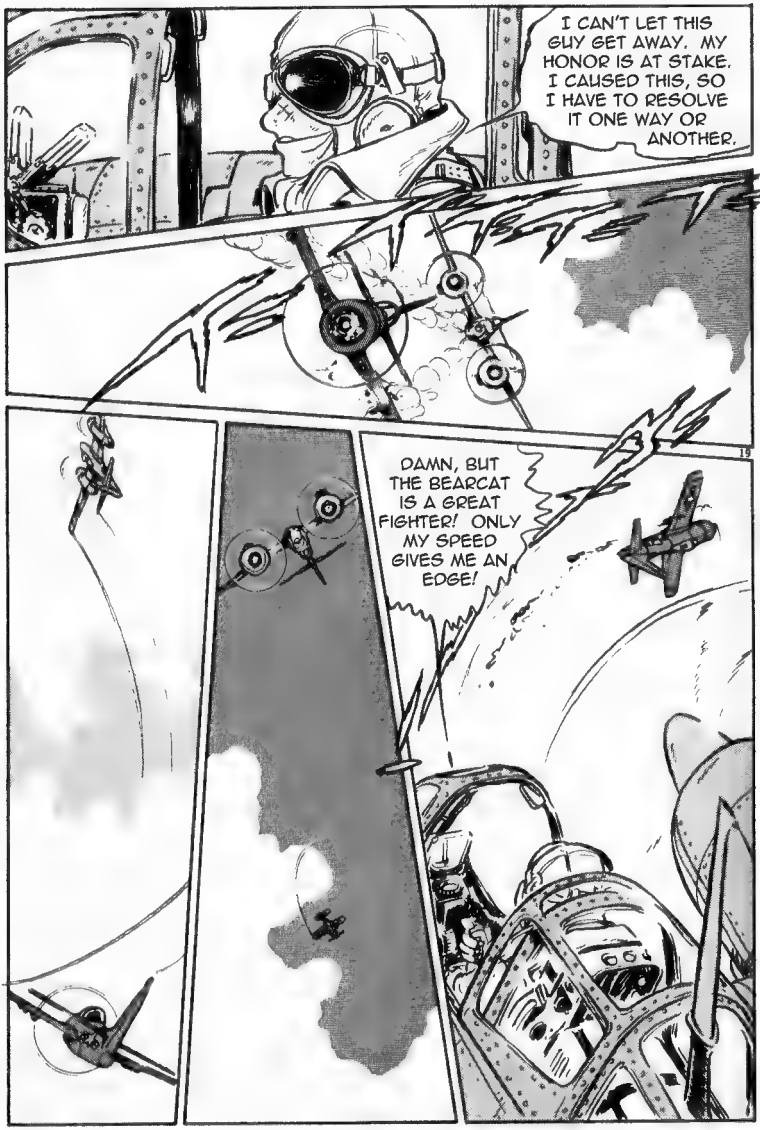
"DITCH IT IN THE OCEAN?!" WHAT A WASTE!
LOOKS LIKE THEY'VE GOT THE BEARCAT PREPPED FOR FLIGHT FOR WHATEVER REASON. THAT'S MY RIDE, OVER!
WC TO 69, WC TO 69! THEY'RE ON TO ME! I'M HAULING ASS OUT OF HERE AS FAST AS I CAN!
FLIGHT SER-GEANT!
... UUHHH ...
SHOOT HIM DOWN! I WANT THAT AMERICAN'S ASS!! NOW MOVE!!!
YES SIR!
THE SPY! THE SPY'S IN THE BEARCAT!!

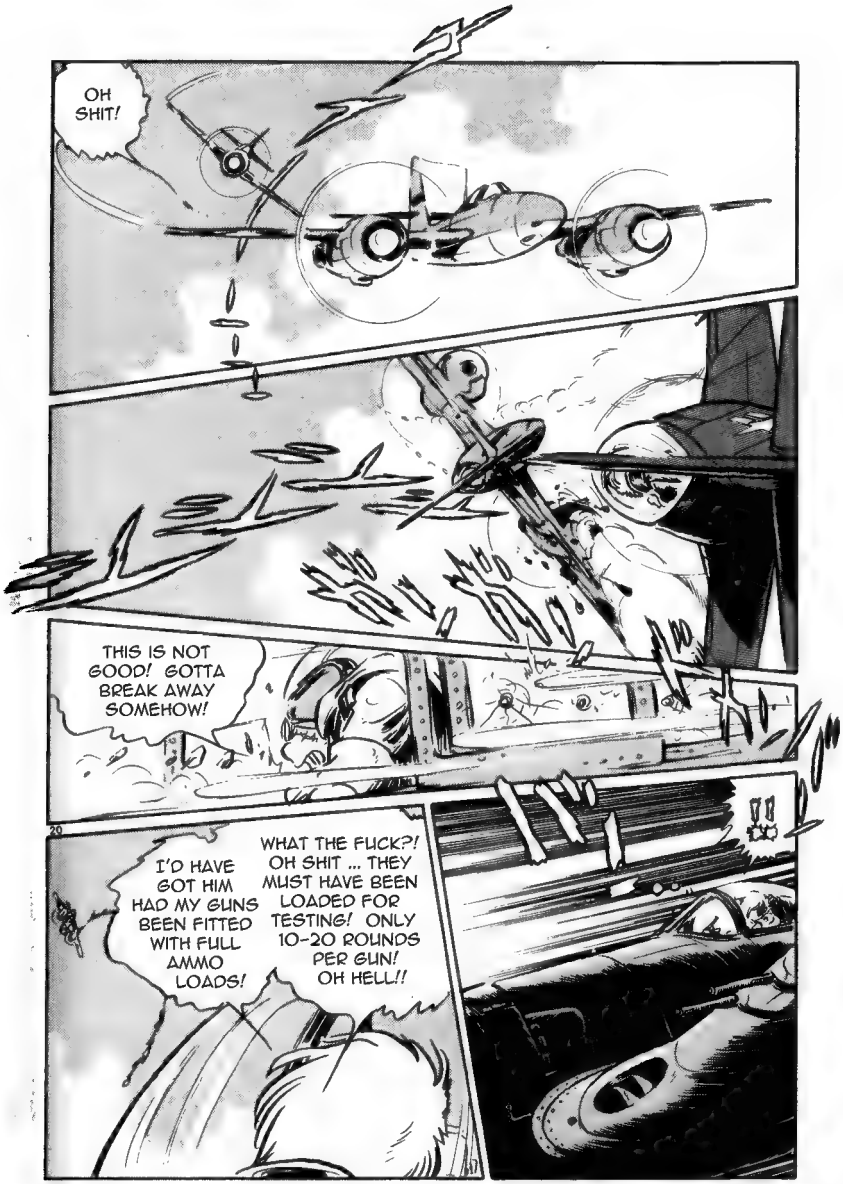

HEY! THAT'S A PROTOTYPE! YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO FLY IT!!
U-800
16
RIGHT NOW, THOUGH, IT'S MY ONLY HOPE OF CATCHING AND SHOOTING DOWN THAT BEARCAT!
I KNOW ALL THE BUGS STILL HAVEN'T BEEN WORKED OUT OF THIS BUT I NEED RAW SPEED AND THIS HAS GOT IT!*

(*) ALTHOUGH GOOGLE TRANSLATE AI TOLD ME THE "U-800" IS SUPPOSED TO BE A KAWASAKI KI-38 (THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT FOR THE KI-43 "NICK"), BOTH THE VISUALS AND THE PLANE'S SHEER SPEED WOULD APPEAR TO INDICATE IT IS ONE OF THE FOUR MITSUBISHI KI-83 PROTOTYPES BUILT AT THE END OF THE WAR. THE KI-43 HAD A TOP SPEED OF 540 KM/H, THE KI-83 OF 704.5 KM/H, AND THE F8F BEARCAT 732 KM/H.

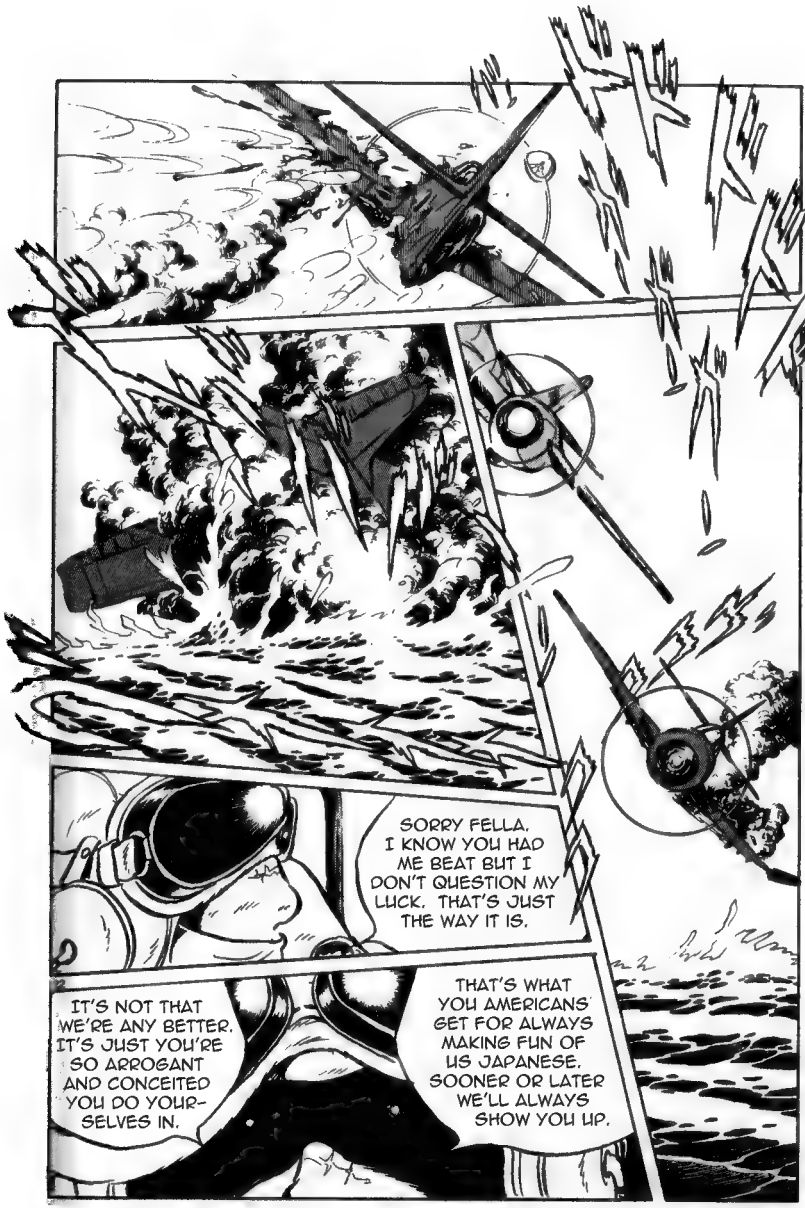

THAT MUST BE THE U-800! AT LEAST I'LL GET TO SEE IT UP CLOSE BEFORE I DIE.
DAMN! THEY MESSED WITH THE PLANE WHILE IT WAS DOWN! THE RADIO'S BROKEN AND I CAN'T HIT MY TOP SPEED OF 730 KM/H, WHILE THAT JAP PLANE IS GAINING ON ME!
U-800
IT MUST HAVE REAL ENGINES, BUT IS THE REST OF IT WOOD AND RICE PAPER?
THAT PLANE'S GOT TO BE DOING AT LEAST 700 KM/H WHILE 680 IS THE BEST I CAN MANAGE!
IT'D HAVE TO BE OR SOMETHING LIKE IT FOR A LATE-STAGE JAP PLANE TO GO THAT FAST!


18
NO, IT'S A REAL PLANE! OTHEWISE IT WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO MANEUVER LIKE THAT!

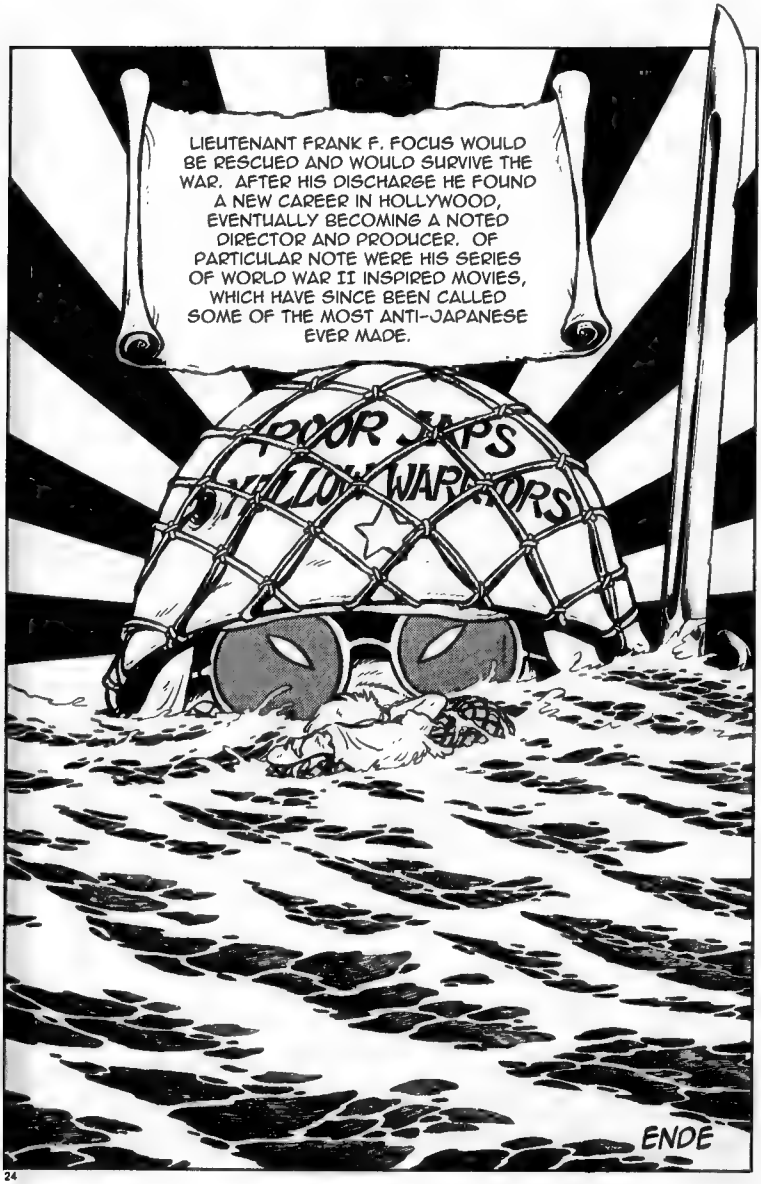

I CAN'T LET THIS GUY GET AWAY. MY HONOR IS AT STAKE. I CAUSED THIS, SO I HAVE TO RESOLVE IT ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
19
DAMN, BUT THE BEARCAT IS A GREAT FIGHTER! ONLY MY SPEED GIVES ME AN EDGE!


OH SHIT!
THIS IS NOT GOOD! GOTTA BREAK AWAY SOMEHOW!
20
I'D HAVE GOT HIM HAD MY GUNS BEEN FITTED WITH FULL AMMO LOADS!
WHAT THE FUCK?! OH SHIT ... THEY MUST HAVE BEEN LOADED FOR TESTING! ONLY 10-20 ROUNDS PER GUN! OH HELL!!

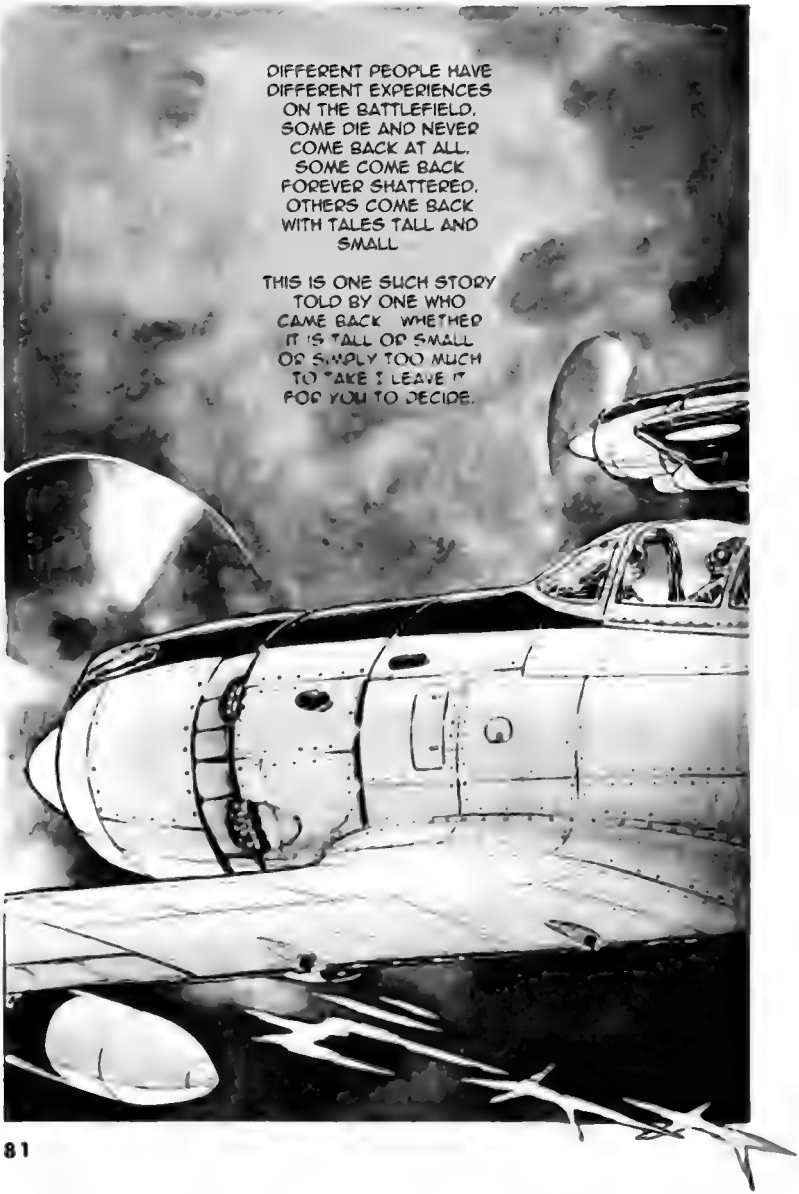
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU STOPPED SHOOTING, BUT IT'S MY TURN NOW!
NOTHING I CAN DO SAVE RUN, AND HE'LL CATCH ME!


SORRY FELLA. I KNOW YOU HAD ME BEAT BUT I DON'T QUESTION MY LUCK. THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT IS.
IT'S NOT THAT WE'RE ANY BETTER. IT'S JUST YOU'RE SO ARROGANT AND CONCEITED YOU DO YOURSELVES IN.
THAT'S WHAT YOU AMERICANS GET FOR ALWAYS MAKING FUN OF US JAPANESE. SOONER OR LATER WE'LL ALWAYS SHOW YOU UP.

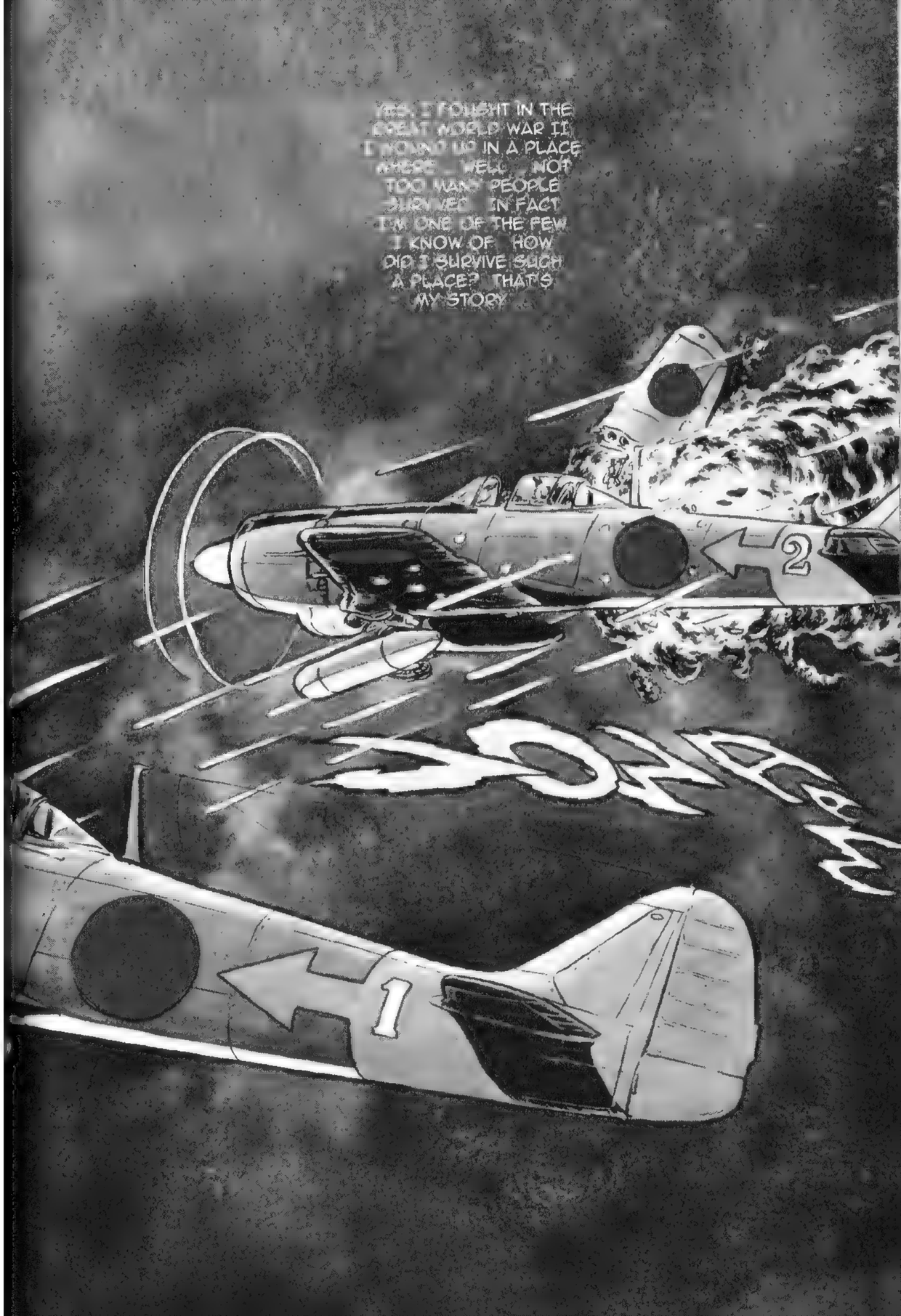
SERVES ME RIGHT FOR UNDERESTIMATING MY ENEMY. I WAS SUPPOSED TO STUDY THE "U-800," NOT GET SHOT DOWN BY IT.
BUT YOU KNOW WHAT? I'M NOT GONNA DIE. I'M GONNA LIVE AND I'M GONNA REPORT EVERYTHING I SAW AND EXPERIENCED SO OTHERS WILL KNOW ABOUT THAT PLANE.
AND I'LL ALSO HAVE TO REPORT THAT DESPITE THEIR PISS-POOR POSITION AT THIS POINT IN THE WAR, THE JAPANESE ARE STILL CAPABLE OF PULLING A FEW SURPRISES.
WELL, MISTER JAPANESE FLIGHT SERGEANT, I HAVE TO HAND IT TO YOU. YOU WON THIS BATTLE. THAT'S ALL YOU WON, THOUGH. YOU HAVEN'T WON THE WAR. WE WILL. WE'LL WIN AND YOU'LL LOSE AND THAT'S THAT.

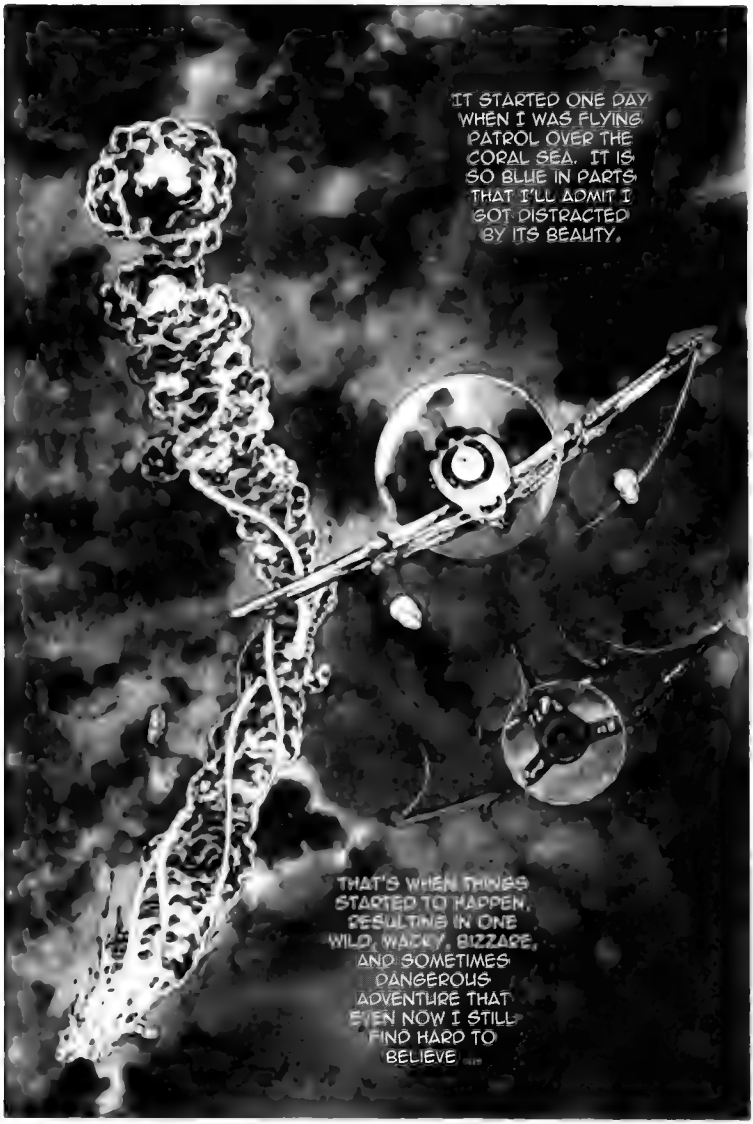

LIEUTENANT FRANK F. FOCUS WOULD BE RESCUED AND WOULD SURVIVE THE WAR. AFTER HIS DISCHARGE HE FOUND A NEW CAREER IN HOLLYWOOD, EVENTUALLY BECOMING A NOTED DIRECTOR AND PRODUCER. OF PARTICULAR NOTE WERE HIS SERIES OF WORLD WAR II INSPIRED MOVIES, WHICH HAVE SINCE BEEN CALLED SOME OF THE MOST ANTI-JAPANESE EVER MADE.
POOR JAPS
WARRIORS
ENDE

HARD METAL

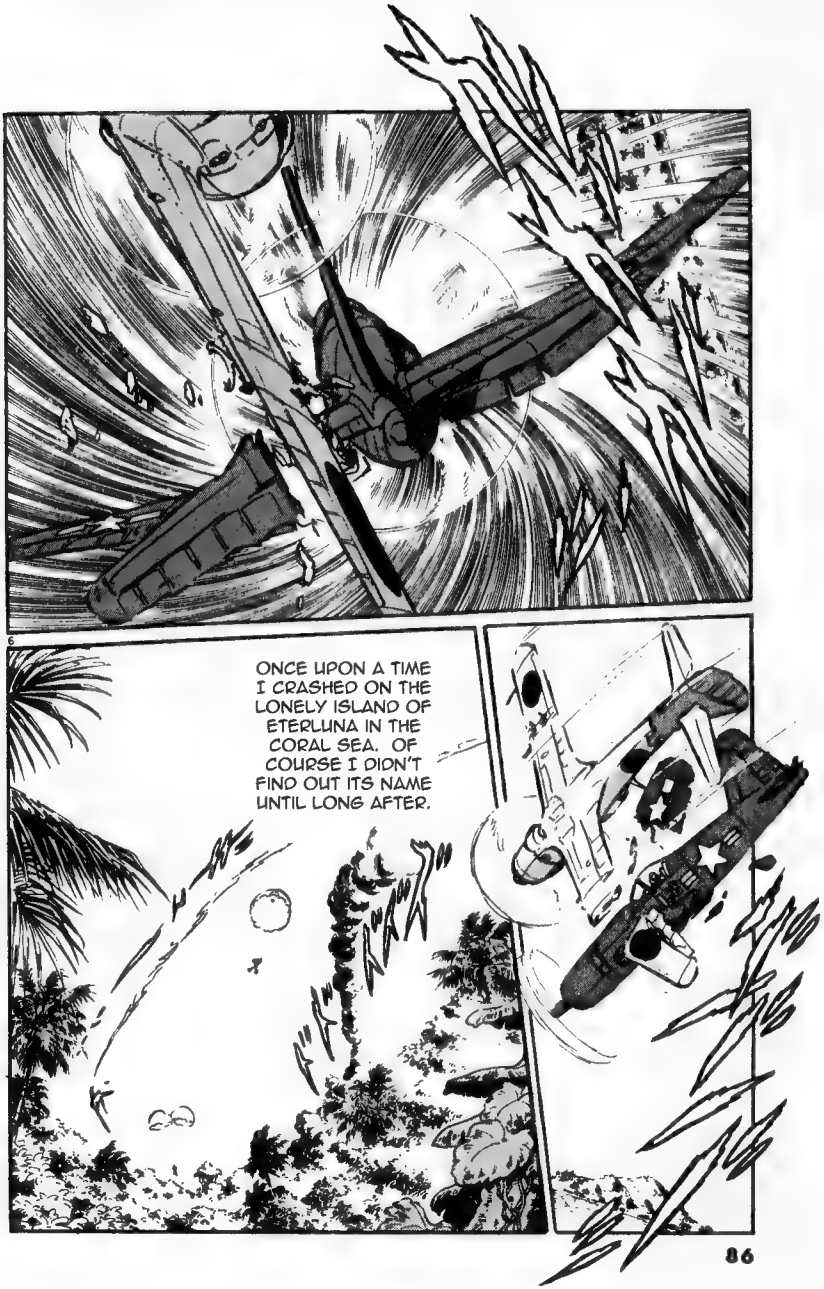

DIFFERENT PEOPLE HAVE DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES ON THE BATTLEFIELD. SOME DIE AND NEVER COME BACK AT ALL. SOME COME BACK FOREVER SHATTERED. OTHERS COME BACK WITH TALES TALL AND SMALL
THIS IS ONE SUCH STORY TOLD BY ONE WHO CAME BACK WHETHER IT IS TALL OR SMALL OR SIMPLY TOO MUCH TO TAKE I LEAVE IT FOR YOU TO DECIDE.

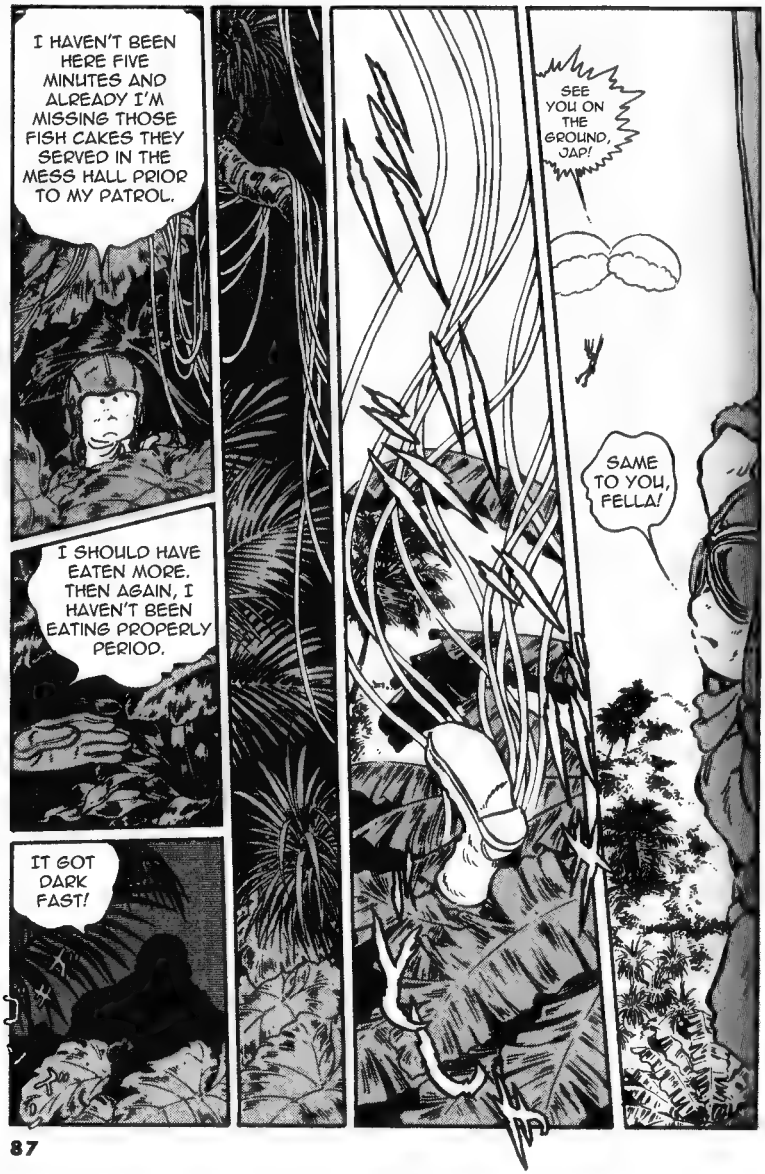
THE QUEEN OF THE CORAL SEA

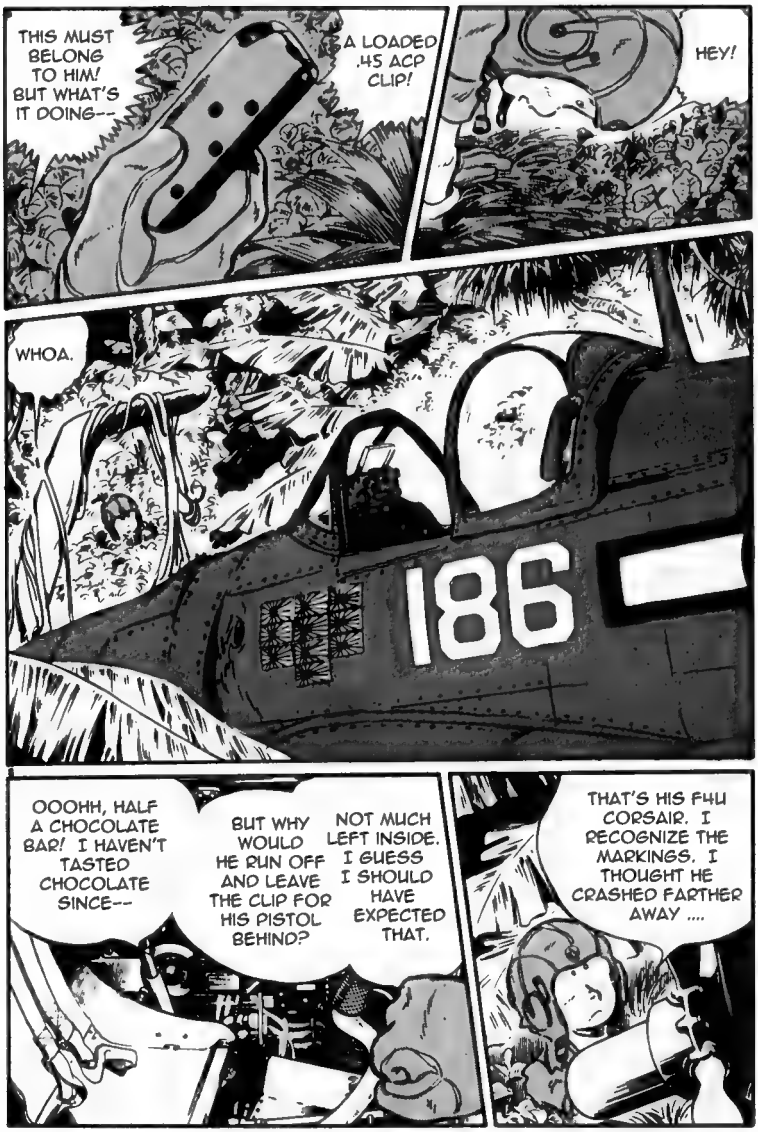

YES, I FOUGHT IN THE GREAT WORLD WAR II. I WOUND UP IN A PLACE WHERE... WELL... NOT TOO MANY PEOPLE SURVIVE. IN FACT I'M ONE OF THE FEW I KNOW OF. HOW DID I SURVIVE SUCH A PLACE? THAT'S MY STORY
2
1

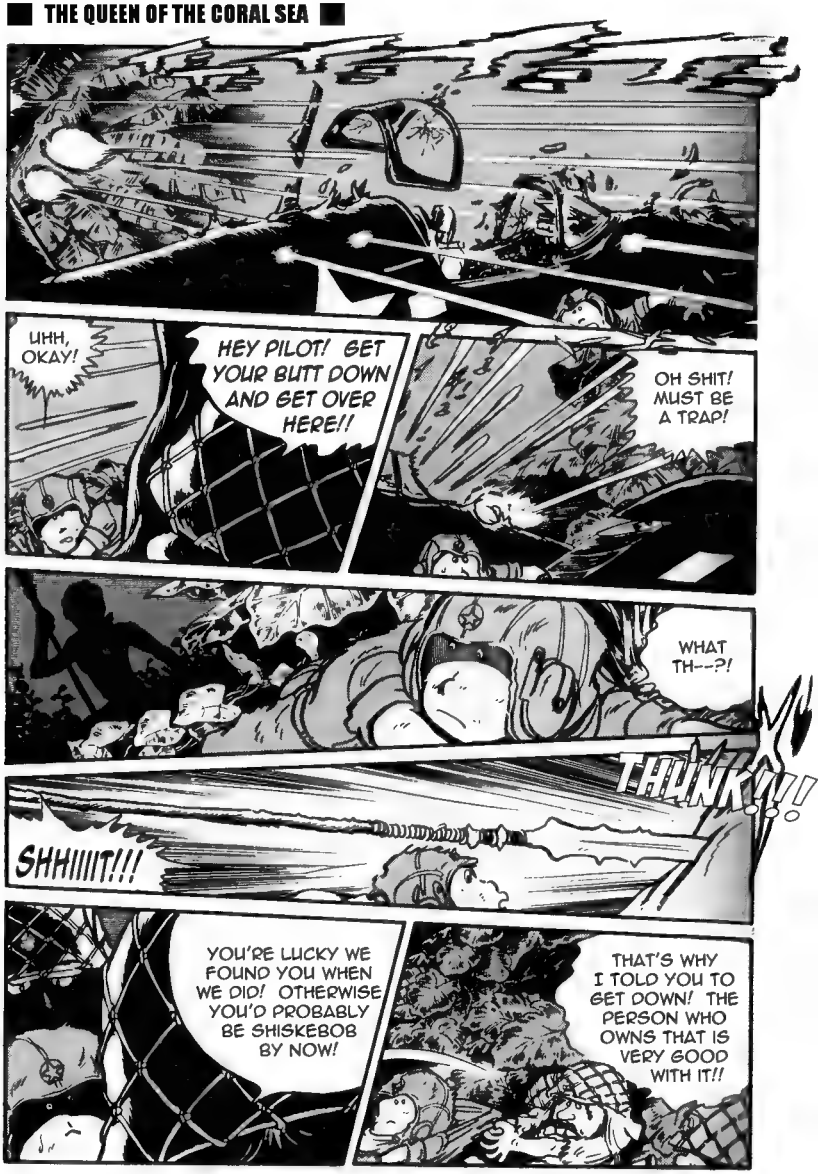

IT STARTED ONE DAY WHEN I WAS FLYING PATROL OVER THE CORAL SEA. IT IS SO BLUE IN PARTS THAT I'LL ADMIT I GOT DISTRACTED BY ITS BEAUTY.
THAT'S WHEN THINGS STARTED TO HAPPEN, RESULTING IN ONE WILD, WACKY, BIZZARE, AND SOMETIMES DANGEROUS ADVENTURE THAT EVEN NOW I STILL FIND HARD TO BELIEVE ...

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE SALT CONTENT IN THE SALT WATER THAT MAKES UP THE CORAL SEA IS EVEN STRONGER THAN IT IS IN THE OCEAN WATERS OFF JAPAN?
HOWEVER, WHEN YOU LICK THE SALT CRYSTALS THAT FORM AFTER THAT WATER HAS EVAPORATED, THEY CAN BE QUITE DELICIOUS.
LICKING SALT EVAPORATED FROM SALT WATER IS ONE THING. DRINKING SALT WATER, HOWEVER, ESPECIALLY IN QUANTITY, CAN BE FATAL.
MY NAME IS KITARO TOKOROZAWA, AND TO THIS DAY THE NAME "CORAL SEA" STILL BRINGS A SHIVER TO MY SPINE.


6
ONCE UPON A TIME I CRASHED ON THE LONELY ISLAND OF ETERLUNA IN THE CORAL SEA. OF COURSE I DIDN'T FIND OUT ITS NAME UNTIL LONG AFTER.


I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE FIVE MINUTES AND ALREADY I'M MISSING THOSE FISH CAKES THEY SERVED IN THE MESS HALL PRIOR TO MY PATROL.
I SHOULD HAVE EATEN MORE. THEN AGAIN, I HAVEN'T BEEN EATING PROPERLY PERIOD.
IT GOT DARK FAST!
SEE YOU ON THE GROUND, JAP!
SAME TO YOU, FELLA!

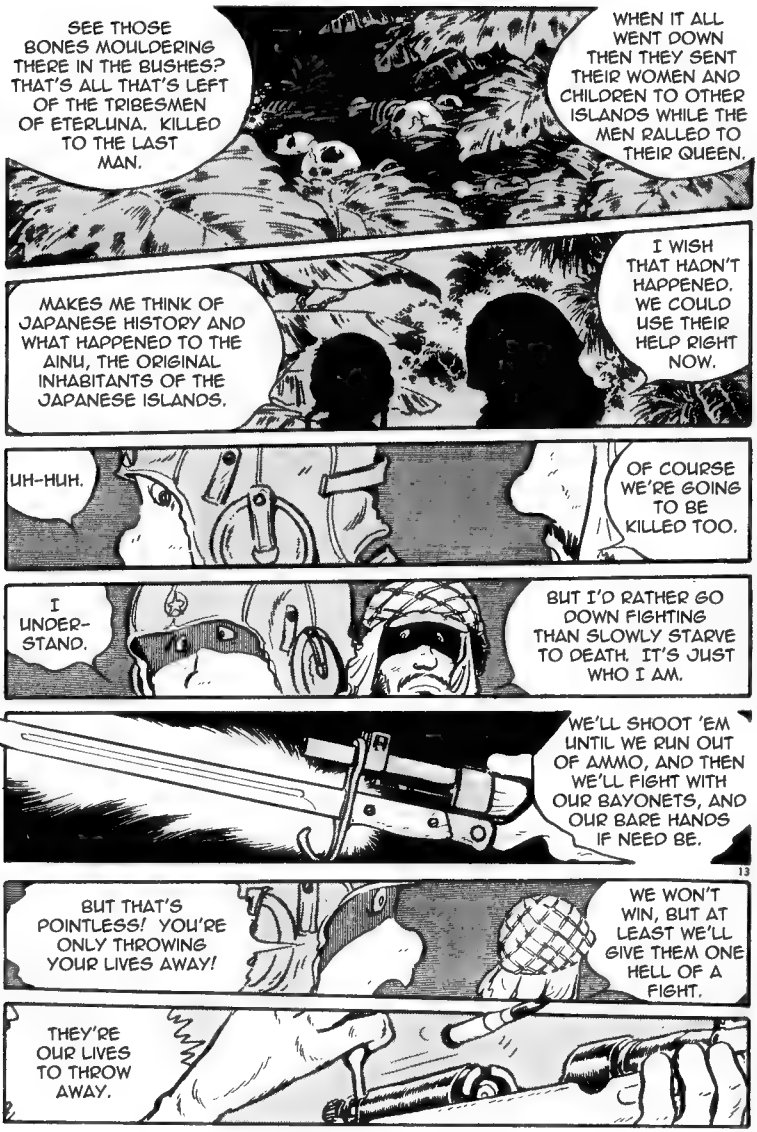

THIS MUST BELONG TO HIM! BUT WHAT'S IT DOING--
A LOADED .45 ACP CLIP!
HEY!
WHOA.
186
OOOHH, HALF A CHOCOLATE BAR! I HAVEN'T TASTED CHOCOLATE SINCE--
BUT WHY WOULD HE RUN OFF AND LEAVE THE CLIP FOR HIS PISTOL BEHIND?
NOT MUCH LEFT INSIDE. I GUESS I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED THAT.
THAT'S HIS F4U CORSAIR. I RECOGNIZE THE MARKINGS. I THOUGHT HE CRASHED FARTHER AWAY ....


UHH, OKAY!
HEY PILOT! GET YOUR BUTT DOWN AND GET OVER HERE!!
OH SHIT! MUST BE A TRAP!
WHAT TH--?!
SHHIIIIT!!!
THUNK!!!
YOU'RE LUCKY WE FOUND YOU WHEN WE DID! OTHERWISE YOU'D PROBABLY BE SHISKEBOB BY NOW!
THAT'S WHY I TOLD YOU TO GET DOWN! THE PERSON WHO OWNS THAT IS VERY GOOD WITH IT!!

YOU'RE SERIOUS. WHAT ABOUT YOUR--
DAMN, BUT THAT'S A LONG WAY OFF! ANYWAY, WHAT YOU SEE HERE IS OUR ENTIRE FORCE.
HE'S BEEN DEAD FOR A LONG TIME NOW.
10
OH, IT'D BE ABOUT A YEAR NOW.
HOW LONG, IF I MAY ASK?
WE EAT WHATEVER WE CAN CATCH. SNAILS, RATS, FROGS, EVEN SNAKES.
WE DON'T HAVE MUCH IN THE WAY OF SUPPLIES OR FOOD.
WHAT ABOUT THE AMERICANS HERE? WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM?
HELLO, SIR. I'M SERGEANT KONDO. GOOD TO SEE ANOTHER ONE OF US HERE.
FLIGHT SERGEANT TOKOROZAWA. MY PLEASURE. I'M BASED AT THE AIRFIELD ON WEI ISLAND.

THEY'VE BEEN HERE SINCE BEFORE THE LIEUTENANT DIED. THEY GET REGULAR RESUPPLY FLIGHTS TOO.
HERE'S ONE OF THEIR M1 RIFLES. SEE HOW MUCH BETTER MADE IT IS THAN OURS?
HERE YOU GO IF YOU'RE HUNGRY. THE REST OF US HAVE TO GET READY FOR THE ATTACK?
NOT THEM, US. WE'RE ATTACKING THEM TONIGHT.
ATTACK? WHEN ARE THEY?
WHY THROW AWAY YOUR LIVES LIKE THAT?!!?
YOU? ATTACK THEM?! IN THE SHAPE YOU'RE IN?!?
11
YES, I KNOW. POVERTY CAN'T WIN AGAINST POWER, BUT AT LEAST IT'LL BE SOMETHING. A GESTURE, YOU KNOW?
BECAUSE IT'S ALL WE'VE GOT LEFT. IF WE DON'T DO IT NOW, WE'LL JUST WITHER AWAY AND DIE.

AND DEADLY. SHE JUST MISSED KILLING YOU LAST NIGHT. DON'T FORGET THAT PART.
YOU SAY SHE'S THE ONLY ONE?
12
YES. THE REST ARE DEAD.
WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN FRIENDS, BUT IT DIDN'T WORK OUT THAT WAY. SHE HATES US AS MUCH AS SHE HATES THE WHITE MEN.
S-SHE'S BEAUTIFUL...
AH, THE QUEEN OF THIS ISLAND IS BACK! SHE THREW THE SPEAR AT YOU LAST NIGHT.
SHE'S ALL THAT'S LEFT OF HER PEOPLE.


SEE THOSE BONES MOULDERING THERE IN THE BUSHES? THAT'S ALL THAT'S LEFT OF THE TRIBESMEN OF ETERUNA. KILLED TO THE LAST MAN.
WHEN IT ALL WENT DOWN THEN THEY SENT THEIR WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO OTHER ISLANDS WHILE THE MEN RALLED TO THEIR QUEEN.
MAKES ME THINK OF JAPANESE HISTORY AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE AINU, THE ORIGINAL INHABITANTS OF THE JAPANESE ISLANDS.
I WISH THAT HADN'T HAPPENED. WE COULD USE THEIR HELP RIGHT NOW.
UH-HUH.
OF COURSE WE'RE GOING TO BE KILLED TOO.
I UNDER-STAND.
BUT I'D RATHER GO DOWN FIGHTING THAN SLOWLY STARVE TO DEATH. IT'S JUST WHO I AM.
WE'LL SHOOT 'EM UNTIL WE RUN OUT OF AMMO, AND THEN WE'LL FIGHT WITH OUR BAYONETS, AND OUR BARE HANDS IF NEED BE.
13
BUT THAT'S POINTLESS! YOU'RE ONLY THROWING YOUR LIVES AWAY!
WE WON'T WIN, BUT AT LEAST WE'LL GIVE THEM ONE HELL OF A FIGHT.
THEY'RE OUR LIVES TO THROW AWAY.

WE WILL MAKE OUR ANCESTORS PROUD! WE WILL FIGHT!!
WE ARE SOLDERS OF THE JAPANESE ARMY. WE ALWAYS FIGHT. WE FOUGHT TO TAKE THIS ISLAND, AND WE WILL FIGHT AS WE GO TO OUR DEATHS.
MORTARS AND GRENADES FIRST TO SOFTEN THEM UP, AND THEN A BANZAI CHARGE!
WE'RE READY, SERGEANT!
IT'S THE NIPS! GET READY FOR A BANZAI CHARGE!!

MOW 'EM DOWN!!!
15
BANZAI!!!
I'M DREAMING! YEAH, I'M DREAMING!

WHAT?!
THEY'RE ALL DEAD.
YOU'RE THAT JAP PILOT WHO RAN INTO MY CORSAIR!

WELL, WELL.
I ... I'VE GOT HIM!
OH SHIT.
JUNI WA KORE GA HITSUYODESU. NEED THIS FOR GUN, YES?
DOZO. YOU TAKE, YES?
MAY I ... ?
TATANAIDE! YOU NO STAND!! DOWN!!!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH MISTER--
WELL IF THAT DON'T BEAT ....

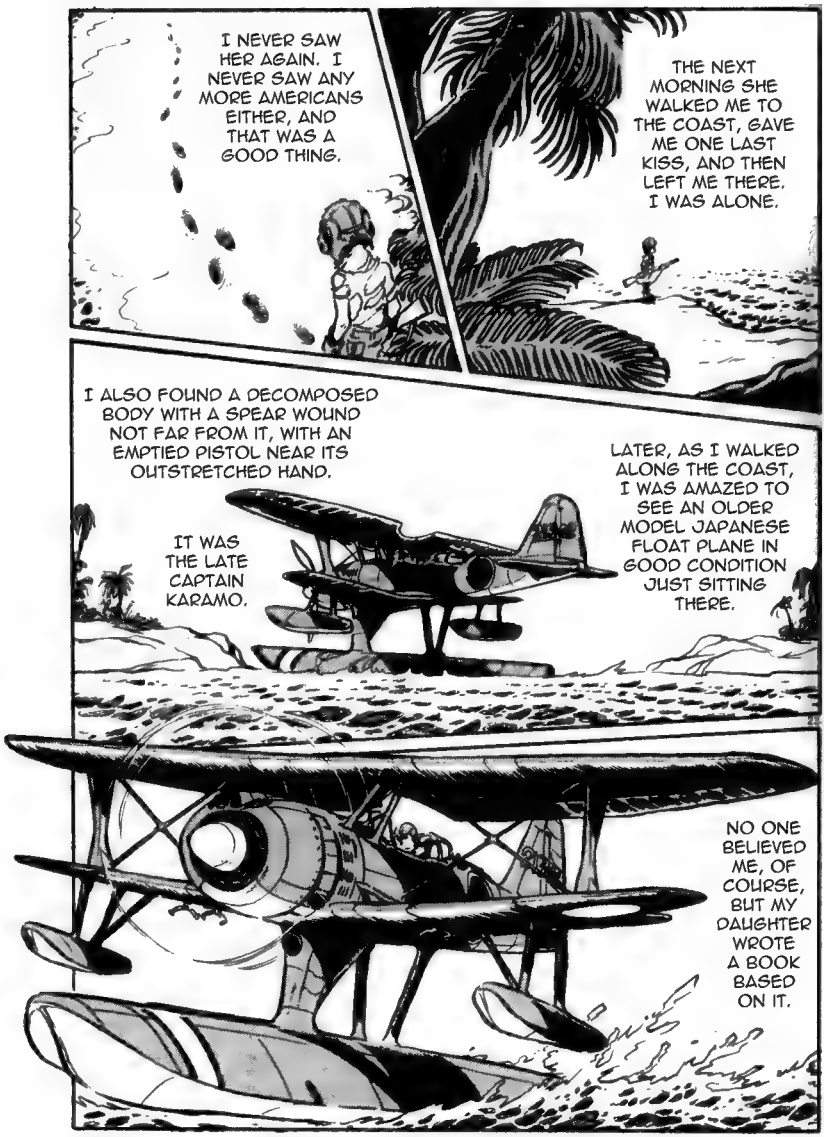
THERE'S ANOTHER! FIRE!!
OCHI-TSUKE. (CALM DOWN.)
KUSO!!! (OH SHIT!!!)
18
AND ENGLISH. MY FATHER WAS JAPANESE. MY MOTHER AMERICAN MISSIONARY. BOTH KILLED IN FIRST WAR. NATIVES ADOPT ME, RAISE ME AS ONE OF THEIR OWN.
YOU ... YOU SPEAK JAPANESE!

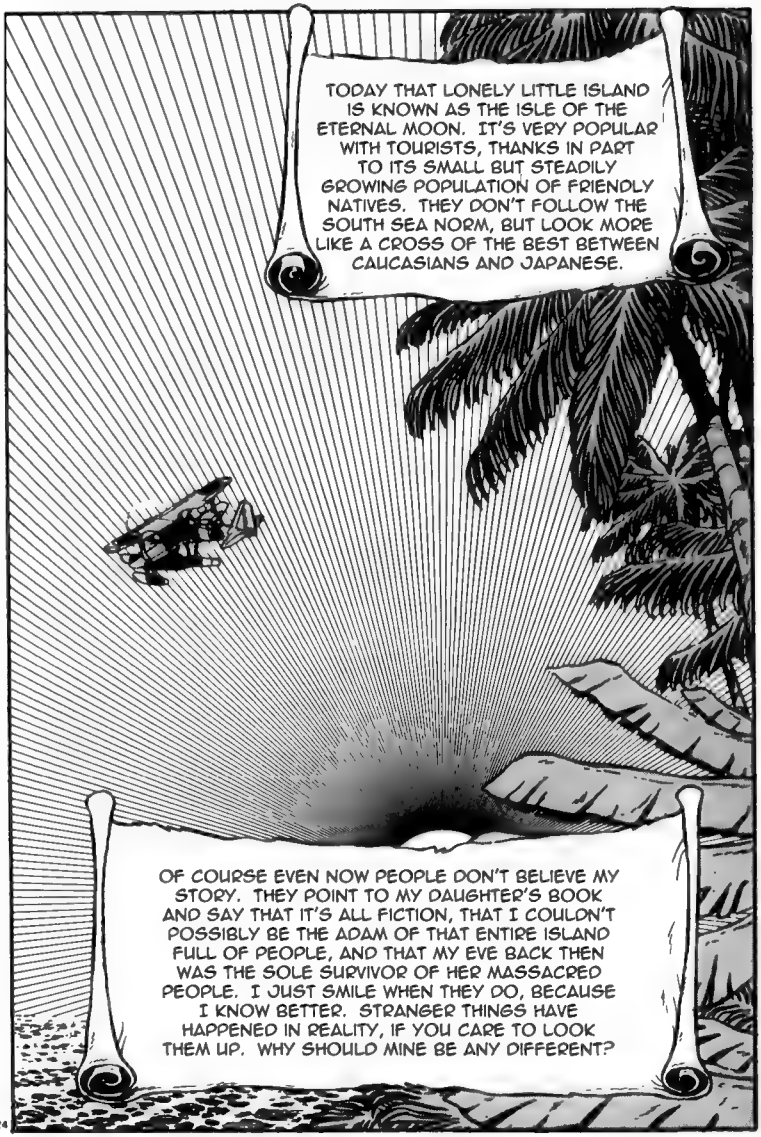
AND NOW I AM LAST ONE. MY NAME IS ISELINA.
I SAW WHAT YOU DID, TRY TO BE FRIEND WITH AMERICAN BEFORE HE KILLED. I ... I APPROVE. GOOD MAN.
YEAH, ONLY IT DION'T WORK OUT. I'M KITARO TOKOROZAWA, FLIGHT SERGEANT, JAPANESE IMPERIAL ARMY AIR CORPS.
KITARO, WILL YOU DO ME FAVOR? WILL YOU ... LOVE ME?
YOU GOOD MAN. I NOT KNOW WHEN NEXT GOOD MAN COME ALONG, OR IF I LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE HIM. YOU HERE NOW. PLEASE ... LOVE ME.
WAR MAKE THINGS CRAZY. I DO CRAZY THING BUT ONLY TO BRING BACK PEOPLE ... IF I LIVE. PLEASE? DO CRAZY THING WITH ME?
WE CAN MAKE LIFE IN MIDDLE OF WAR ...
OR WE LET DEATH HAVE ITS WAY.

UHHH, YEAH. SURE. MAKE LIFE. I'M ALL FOR THAT.
ALL MY PEOPLE ... DEAD ... BUT YOU ... GOOD MAN ... YOU CAN HELP MAKE NEW ONES. PLEASE?
THANK YOU, KITARO. I SAY AGAIN, YOU ARE GOOD MAN. GOOD PEOPLE WILL COME FROM YOU.
YEAH! GOOD PEO-- OHH! OOOHH! AAAHHH!!!

AHHH ... YES, YES ... WE MAKE NEW LIFE TOGETHER AMONG ALL THIS DEATH ... YES ... YES ... AAAAHHH ...
IF THIS WORK THEN YOU BE THE FATHER OF NEW PEOPLE.
YOUR PEOPLE MAY LOSE THIS WAR, BUT MY PEOPLE WILL LIVE THANKS TO YOU.
MAN FROM THOSE WHO KILL IN FIRST PLACE NOW HELP MAKE NEW PEOPLE. WHAT IS THE WORD? "IRONY?"
I LEAD YOU TO HIM. HE WILL HELP YOU GET AWAY, BUT ONLY WHEN WE DONE. YES ... YES ... YES ... ONLY WHEN WE DONE ... YES! ... YES!
WHEN WE DONE I HELP. YOU. I KNOW MAN FROM YOUR PEOPLE. CAPTAIN KARAMO, THE DEVILISH ONE. HE BAD MAN BUT HE ONE OF YOURS.
OH THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THAAAAAAAANNNK YOOOOOUUUU!!!
NOBODY'S GOING TO BELIEVE ME BACK HOME WHEN I TELL THEM. THEY'LL THINK I'M OFF MY NUT.
... AAH ... AAHHH ... WHAT A CRAZY MIXED-UP PLACE THIS ISLAND IS. I CRASH LAND HERE, I ALMOST DIE IN A BANZAI CHARGE, AND NOW I'VE MADE LOVE TO ITS QUEEN!

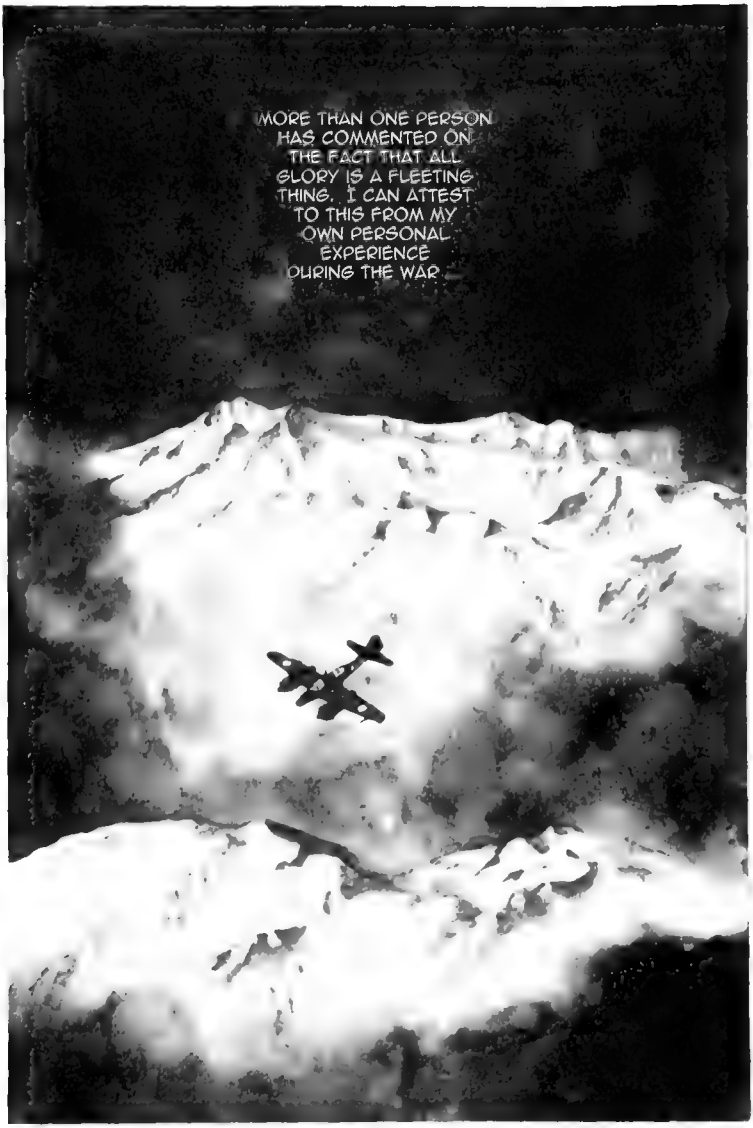
AND YET ... IN OUR LITTLE NEST HERE DEEP IN THE JUNGLE ... PERHAPS ... JUST PERHAPS ... A NEW LIFE WAS BORN.
THIS ISLAND. IT'S SO FULL OF DEATH. THE NATIVES ... SERGEANT KONDO AND HIS MEN ... THAT AMERICAN PILOT ... THE OTHER AMERICANS IN THAT FIREFIGHT ....
YOU'LL BE ALL ALONE HERE. WHAT IF THE AMERICANS FIND YOU?
BUT WHAT WILL YOU DO, ISELINA?
I HOPE SO, DEAR KITARO. THANK YOU. THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID, AND THANK YOU FOR CARING. YOU REALLY ARE A GOOD MAN.
REST NOW. I WILL TAKE YOU TO THE COAST IN THE MORNING.
THEY WON'T FIND ME, AND I WON'T BE ALONE. REMEMBER WHAT WE DID TONIGHT. I KNOW THAT IT WORKED ... AND THAT SOME MONTHS FROM NOW I'LL HAVE COMPANY.
22
DREAM ... DREAM ... DREAM ... ...
NOW GO TO SLEEP, DEAR KITARO, AND DREAM PLEASANT DREAMS.


I NEVER SAW HER AGAIN. I NEVER SAW ANY MORE AMERICANS EITHER, AND THAT WAS A GOOD THING.
THE NEXT MORNING SHE WALKED ME TO THE COAST, GAVE ME ONE LAST KISS, AND THEN LEFT ME THERE. I WAS ALONE.
I ALSO FOUND A DECOMPOSED BODY WITH A SPEAR WOUND NOT FAR FROM IT, WITH AN EMPTIED PISTOL NEAR ITS OUTSTRETCHED HAND.
IT WAS THE LATE CAPTAIN KARAMO.
LATER, AS I WALKED ALONG THE COAST, I WAS AMAZED TO SEE AN OLDER MODEL JAPANESE FLOAT PLANE IN GOOD CONDITION JUST SITTING THERE.
NO ONE BELIEVED ME, OF COURSE, BUT MY DAUGHTER WROTE A BOOK BASED ON IT.


TODAY THAT LONELY LITTLE ISLAND IS KNOWN AS THE ISLE OF THE ETERNAL MOON. IT'S VERY POPULAR WITH TOURISTS, THANKS IN PART TO ITS SMALL BUT STEADILY GROWING POPULATION OF FRIENDLY NATIVES. THEY DON'T FOLLOW THE SOUTH SEA NORM, BUT LOOK MORE LIKE A CROSS OF THE BEST BETWEEN CAUCASIANS AND JAPANESE.
OF COURSE EVEN NOW PEOPLE DON'T BELIEVE MY STORY. THEY POINT TO MY DAUGHTER'S BOOK AND SAY THAT IT'S ALL FICTION, THAT I COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE THE ADAM OF THAT ENTIRE ISLAND FULL OF PEOPLE, AND THAT MY EVE BACK THEN WAS THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF HER MASSACRED PEOPLE. I JUST SMILE WHEN THEY DO, BECAUSE I KNOW BETTER. STRANGER THINGS HAVE HAPPENED IN REALITY, IF YOU CARE TO LOOK THEM UP. WHY SHOULD MINE BE ANY DIFFERENT?

ENDE

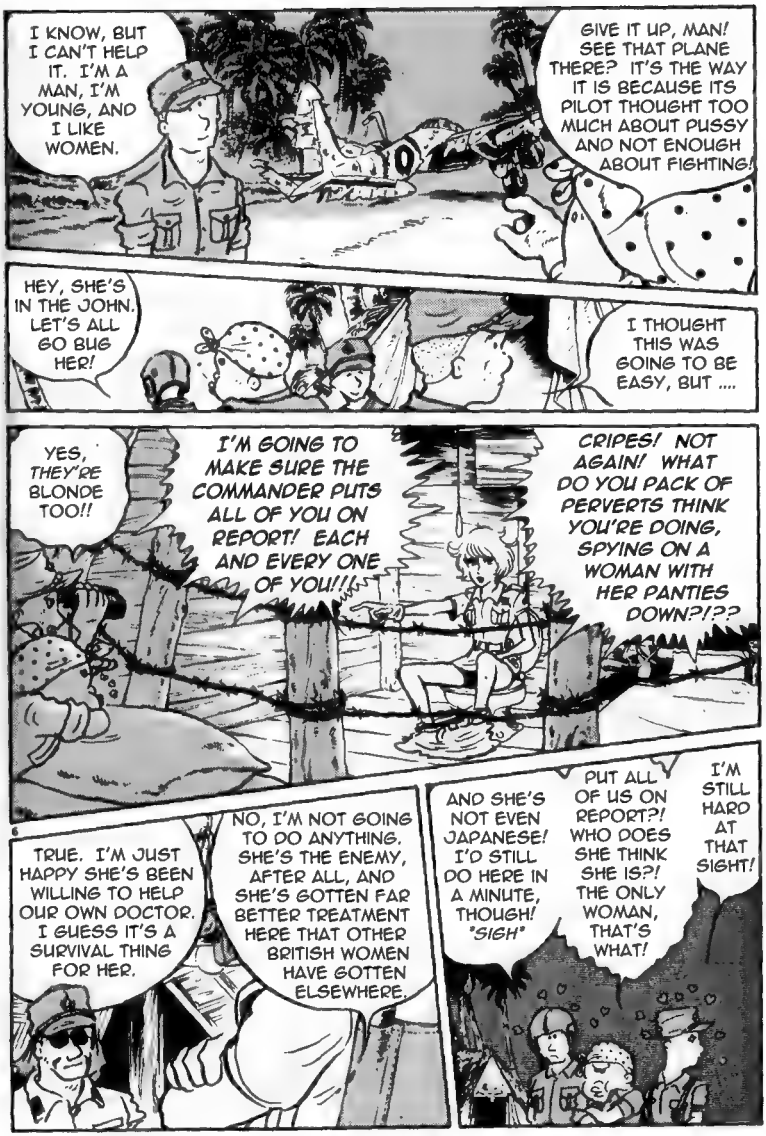
HARD METAL


MORE THAN ONE PERSON HAS COMMENTED ON THE FACT THAT ALL GLORY IS A FLEETING THING. I CAN ATTEST TO THIS FROM MY OWN PERSONAL EXPERIENCE DURING THE WAR.

THE BLACK CLAD SUN
CURRENT ALTITUDE 3200 METERS. CURRENT LOCATION ABOUT 100 METERS LEFT OF MOUNT ALMA, SKIRTING ITS RIGHT SIDE.
13
BE CAREFUL! THERE ARE AMERICANS ALL OVER THE PLACE DOWN THERE!

INCREASING ALTITUDE! WE'RE GOING STRAIGHT OVER IT!
WE'VE NO CHOICE GIVEN THAT THE AMERICANS ARE ON BOTH SIDES.

MORE OF THE LOCAL VARIETY OF POTATO. SAY, GOT ANY SPICES LEFT TO KILL THE BITTERNESS? IT LEAVES A BAD AFTERTASTE.
OOHHH! WHAT'D YOU DIG UP TODAY?
THAT'S SQUADRON LEADER KIGEN. HE'S OUR BEST PILOT.
I KNOW BUT I'M STILL WORRIED. WE'VE ONLY GOT SEVEN PLANES LEFT ...
I PREFER TO THINK POSITIVE. HAVING FEWER PLANES MEANS WE HAVE MORE FUEL AND AMMO FOR THE ONES WE HAVE LEFT.
'FRAID NOT. WE'RE EVEN MORE SHORT ON SPICES THAN WE ARE PLANES.
HMMH! YOU'RE RIGHT. I SUPPOSE THAT'S ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT IT.
5
OH, NOTHING. I JUST STRUCK OUT AGAIN, THAT'S ALL.
HEY, SERGEANT TAMIGUCHI! WHAT'S UP?
... AND WE ALWAYS LOSE CONTACT UNTIL THEY COME BACK AROUND FROM BEHIND MOUNT ALMA.

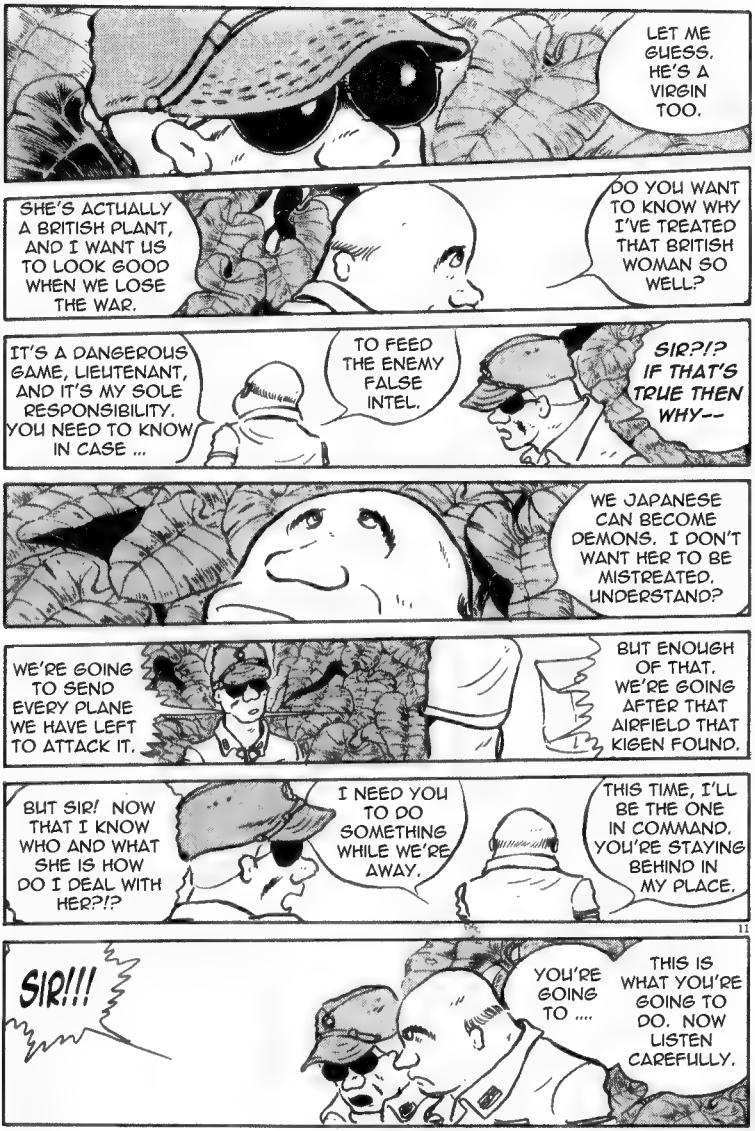

I KNOW, BUT I CAN'T HELP IT. I'M A MAN, I'M YOUNG, AND I LIKE WOMEN.
GIVE IT UP, MAN! SEE THAT PLANE THERE? IT'S THE WAY IT IS BECAUSE ITS PILOT THOUGHT TOO MUCH ABOUT PUSSY AND NOT ENOUGH ABOUT FIGHTING!
HEY, SHE'S IN THE JOHN. LET'S ALL GO BUG HER!
I THOUGHT THIS WAS GOING TO BE EASY, BUT ....
YES, THEY'RE BLONDE TOO!!
I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE THE COMMANDER PUTS ALL OF YOU ON REPORT! EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU!!!
CRIPES! NOT AGAIN! WHAT DO YOU PACK OF PERVERTS THINK YOU'RE DOING, SPYING ON A WOMAN WITH HER PANTIES DOWN?!??
TRUE. I'M JUST HAPPY SHE'S BEEN WILLING TO HELP OUR OWN DOCTOR. I GUESS IT'S A SURVIVAL THING FOR HER.
NO, I'M NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING. SHE'S THE ENEMY, AFTER ALL, AND SHE'S GOTTEN FAR BETTER TREATMENT HERE THAT OTHER BRITISH WOMEN HAVE GOTTEN ELSEWHERE.
AND SHE'S NOT EVEN JAPANESE! I'D STILL DO HERE IN A MINUTE, THOUGH! *SIGH*
PUT ALL OF US ON REPORT?! WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS?! THE ONLY WOMAN, THAT'S WHAT!
I'M STILL HARD AT THAT SIGHT!

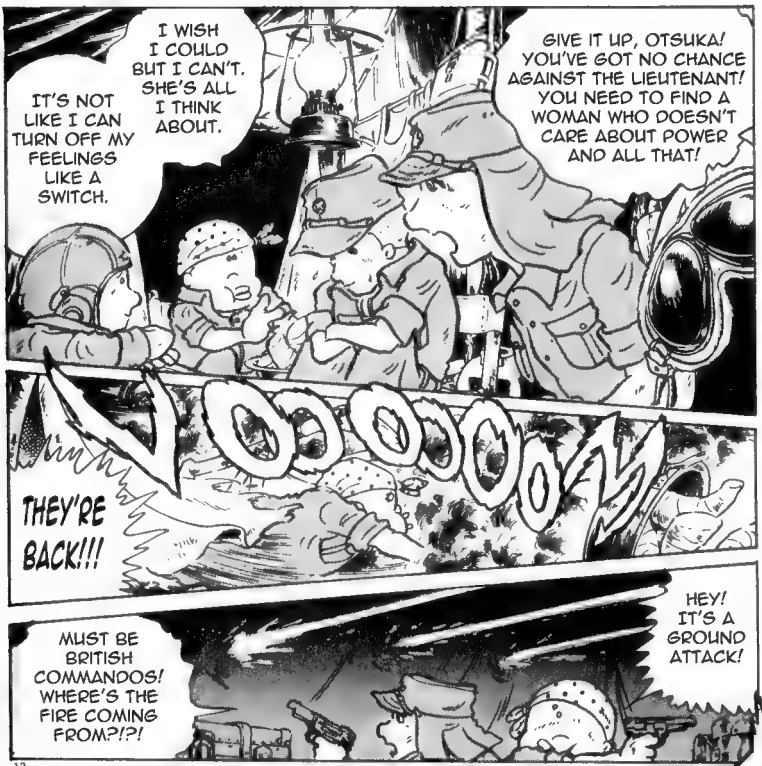
LOOKS LIKE THEY MEAN BUSINESS. THEY GOT PLENTY OF PLANES.
HMM ... "THE BRITISH HAVE SET UP AN AIRFIELD NORTH OF MOUNT ALMA. WE SAW APPROIMATELY 100 FIGHTERS AND 120 TWIN-ENGINED FIGHTER-BOMBERS, ALONG WITH 60 OTHER AIRCRAFT."
WE GOT THIS FROM THE RECON PLANE RIGHT BEFORE WE LOST CONTACT.
GIVE IT ANOTHER GO! WE'RE ALL WITH YOU!
WELL ALL RIGHT THEN! I'M GOING TO--
7
WE'RE BEING BOMBED!
OH?! AND WHATEVER GAVE YOU THAT IDEA, MR. OBVIOUS?!

THAT BOY'S GOT IT AND GOT IT BAD. *SIGH*
HE'S FUCKIN' CRAZY, YOU KNOW THAT?! HE MIGHT GET KILLED!!
WANNA LAY ODDS THAT'S WHERE HE'LL FIND HER? WHAT A FUCKIN' MESS.
I'LL BET OTSUKA DOESN'T KNOW THAT SHE WAS WITH LIEUTENANT SHIMAYAMA RIGHT BEFORE THE BOMBING STARTED.
8
I'M GOING TO MAKE SURE SHE'S ALL RIGHT! WE DON'T WANT TO LOSE OUR NURSE NOW, DO WE?!
OTSUKA! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!

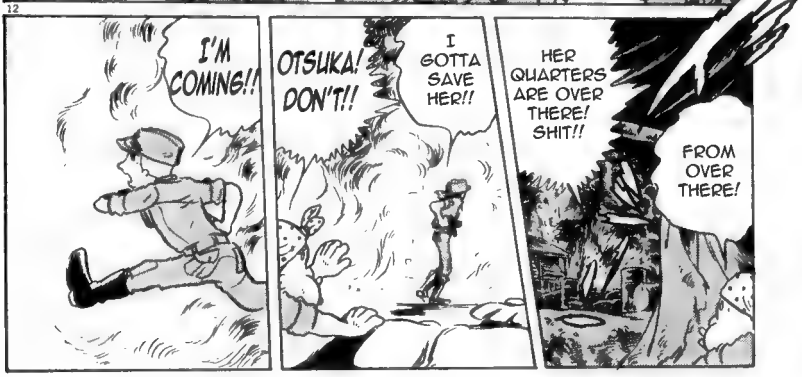
NO
I FEEL SO STUPID.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, SHIMAYAMA. IF SHE WAS GOING TO HOOK UP WITH ONE OF US I'M GLAD IT'S YOU.
SIR! I ....
AH, THERE YOU ARE!
NO SIR.
DID YOU KNOW THAT SERGEANT TAMIYUCHI LIKED HER TOO?
POOR GUY.
THERE HE IS NOW. HE MUST HAVE SEEN YOU WITH HER.
10
HALF YOUR AGE. BY THE WAY, THE BRITISHER CLAIMS SHE'S A VIRGIN. NOT THAT THAT'S IMPORTANT ....
NO SIR, I DON'T.
HE'S BEEN SITTING THERE EVER SINCE THE BOMBING ENDED. THAT WAS THREE HOURS AGO. BY THE WAY, DO YOU KNOW HOW OLD OTSUKA TAMIYUCHI IS?


LET ME GUESS. HE'S A VIRGIN TOO.
SHE'S ACTUALLY A BRITISH PLANT, AND I WANT US TO LOOK GOOD WHEN WE LOSE THE WAR.
DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY I'VE TREATED THAT BRITISH WOMAN SO WELL?
IT'S A DANGEROUS GAME, LIEUTENANT, AND IT'S MY SOLE RESPONSIBILITY. YOU NEED TO KNOW IN CASE ...
TO FEED THE ENEMY FALSE INTEL.
SIR?!? IF THAT'S TRUE THEN WHY--
WE JAPANESE CAN BECOME DEMONS. I DON'T WANT HER TO BE MISTREATED. UNDERSTAND?
WE'RE GOING TO SEND EVERY PLANE WE HAVE LEFT TO ATTACK IT.
BUT ENOUGH OF THAT. WE'RE GOING AFTER THAT AIRFIELD THAT KIGEN FOUND.
BUT SIR! NOW THAT I KNOW WHO AND WHAT SHE IS HOW DO I DEAL WITH HER?!?
I NEED YOU TO DO SOMETHING WHILE WE'RE AWAY.
THIS TIME, I'LL BE THE ONE IN COMMAND. YOU'RE STAYING BEHIND IN MY PLACE.
11
SIR!!!
YOU'RE GOING TO ....
THIS IS WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO. NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY.

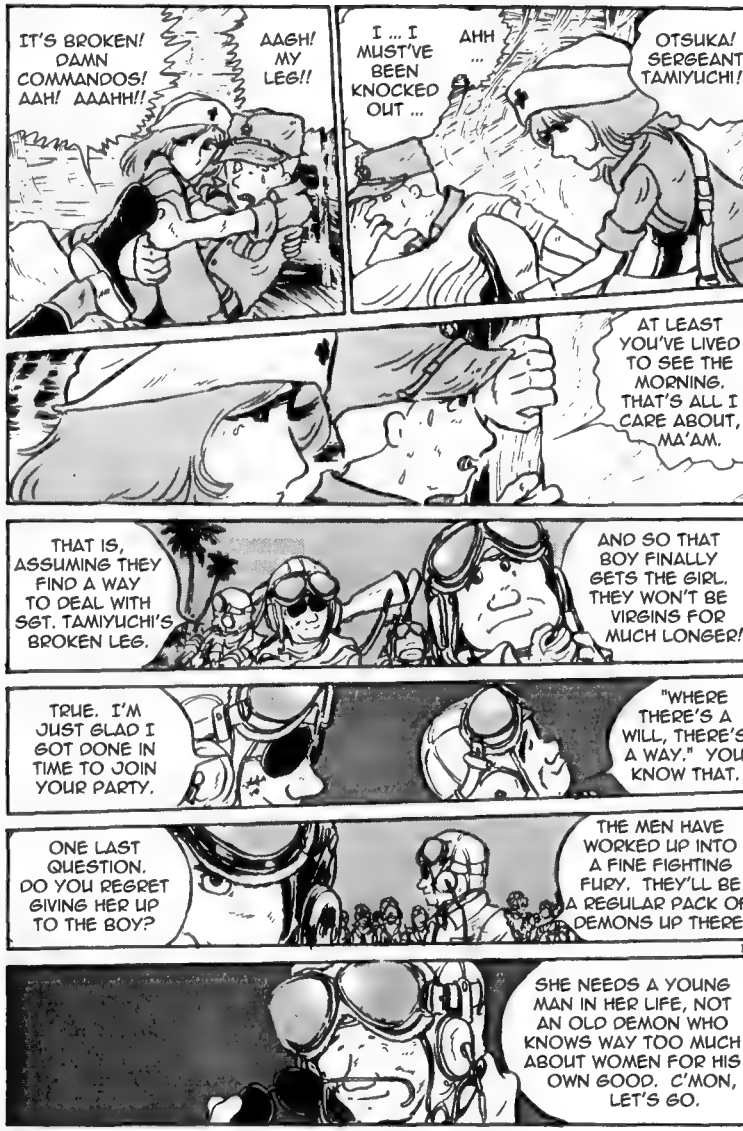

IT'S NOT LIKE I CAN TURN OFF MY FEELINGS LIKE A SWITCH.
I WISH I COULD BUT I CAN'T. SHE'S ALL I THINK ABOUT.
GIVE IT UP, OTSUKA! YOU'VE GOT NO CHANCE AGAINST THE LIEUTENANT! YOU NEED TO FIND A WOMAN WHO DOESN'T CARE ABOUT POWER AND ALL THAT!
VOOOOOOM
THEY'RE BACK!!!
MUST BE BRITISH COMMANDOS! WHERE'S THE FIRE COMING FROM?!?!
HEY! IT'S A GROUND ATTACK!

12

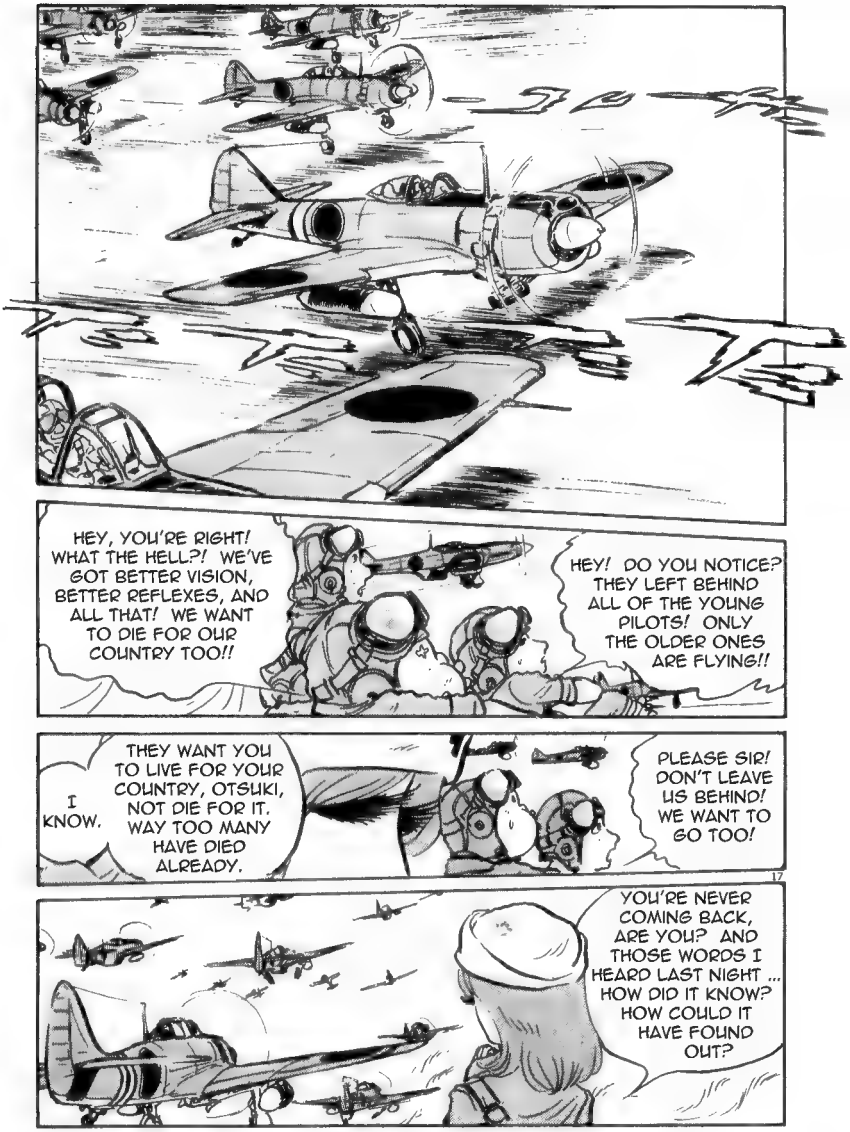

I'M COMING!!
OTSUKA! DON'T!!
I GOTTA SAVE HER!!
HER QUARTERS ARE OVER THERE! SHIT!!
FROM OVER THERE!

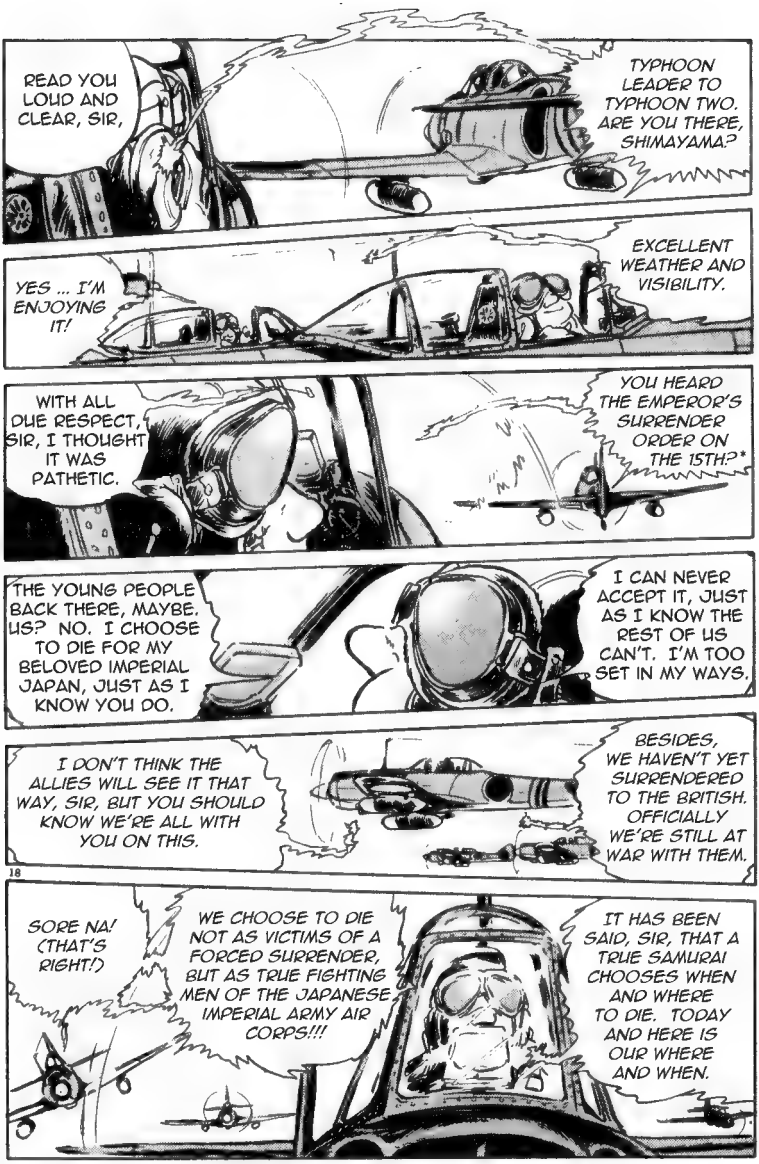
AAHHH!
... AAH ...
I AM NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM. I AM A BATTLEFIELD DEMON, AND I AM HERE BECAUSE OF YOU.
YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
13
HE THOUGHT IT WAS CHANCE. HE WAS HAPPY FOR THAT CHANCE. HE DIDN'T YOU YOU PICKED HIM FOR WHO AND WHAT HE WAS.
YOU MADE HIM HAPPY AND IN THAT HE WAS CONTENT. OH, BUT IF ONLY HE HAD KNOW WHAT YOU REALLY ARE, "NURSE!"
THIS MAN WHOSE FORM I HAVE TAKEN LOVED YOU, WITH ALL HIS HEART AND SOUL AS ANY MAN WOULD IN HIS PLACE.
IT IS NOT TOO LATE FOR HIM, NOR IS IT FOR YOU. THINK OF WHAT I HAVE SAID TODAY IN THIS FIRE. ALSO THINK OF POOR OTSUKA TAMIYUCHI THERE, WHOSE SOUL MAY SOON JOIN ME.
BUT WHEN HE DIES AND COMES TO ME THEN HE'LL KNOW. I WILL TELL HIM WHO AND WHAT YOU REALLY ARE.

I ... I DIDN'T KNOW. HONEST, I DIDN'T KNOW! AND AS FOR--
HE LOVED YOU FROM AFAR, BECAUSE YOU WOULDN'T LET HIM LOVE ANY OTHER WAY.
YES ... THEN HE STILL LIVES! OTSUKA STILL LIVES!
HE WAS ... NO ... IS ... A GOOD MAN. HEAR HIS MOAN?
AND WHEN YOU MAKE YOUR REPORT TO YOUR REAL MASTERS, KEEP WHAT I HAVE SAID IN MIND.
IT IS TIME FOR ME TO GO AND FOR YOU TO TEND THE FALLEN. DO NOT FORGET ALL THAT I HAVE SAID ...
14
OW! OW!! OW!!!
HOT! HOT!! HOT!!!
HEY! IS EVERYONE ALL RIGHT IN HERE?!
I ... I WILL.

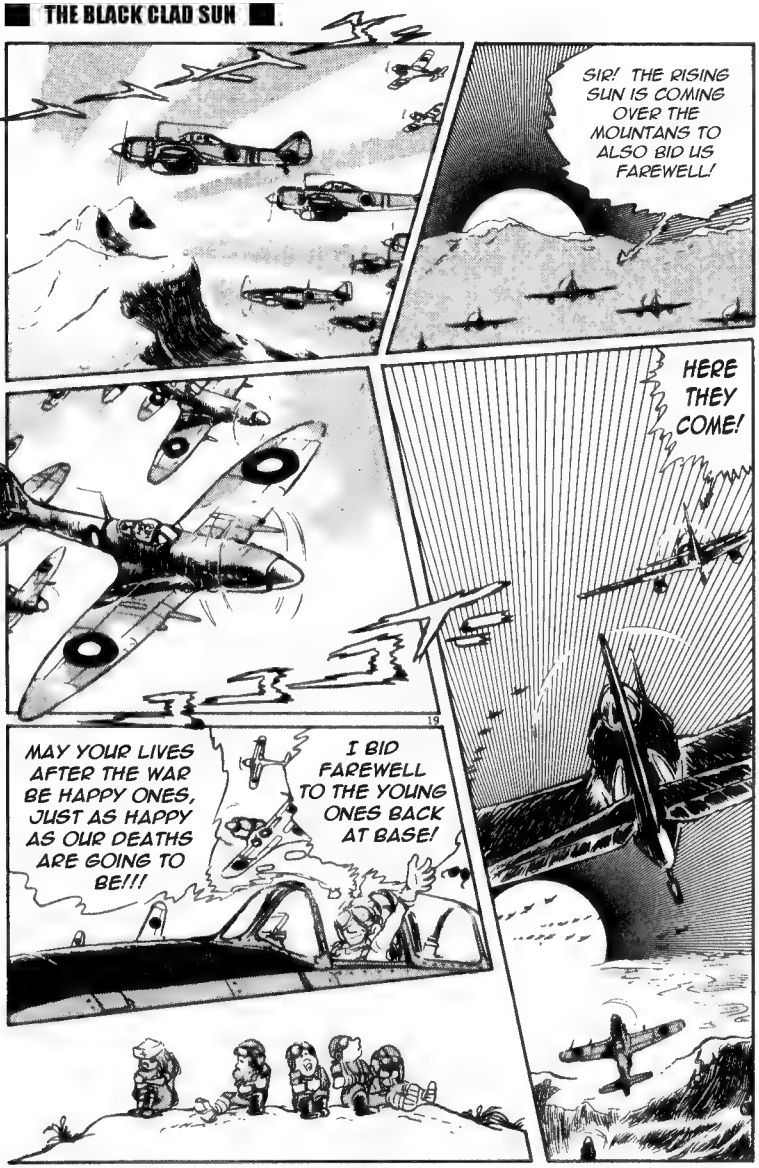

IT'S BROKEN! DAMN COMMANDOS! AAH! AAAHH!!
AAGH! MY LEG!!
I ... I MUST'VE BEEN KNOCKED OUT ...
AHH ...
OTSUKA! SERGEANT TAMIYUCHI!
AT LEAST YOU'VE LIVED TO SEE THE MORNING. THAT'S ALL I CARE ABOUT, MA'AM.
THAT IS, ASSUMING THEY FIND A WAY TO DEAL WITH SGT. TAMIYUCHI'S BROKEN LEG.
AND SO THAT BOY FINALLY GETS THE GIRL. THEY WON'T BE VIRGINS FOR MUCH LONGER!
TRUE. I'M JUST GLAD I GOT DONE IN TIME TO JOIN YOUR PARTY.
"WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY." YOU KNOW THAT.
ONE LAST QUESTION. DO YOU REGRET GIVING HER UP TO THE BOY?
THE MEN HAVE WORKED UP INTO A FINE FIGHTING FURY. THEY'LL BE A REGULAR PACK OF DEMONS UP THERE.
15
SHE NEEDS A YOUNG MAN IN HER LIFE, NOT AN OLD DEMON WHO KNOWS WAY TOO MUCH ABOUT WOMEN FOR HIS OWN GOOD. C'MON, LET'S GO.

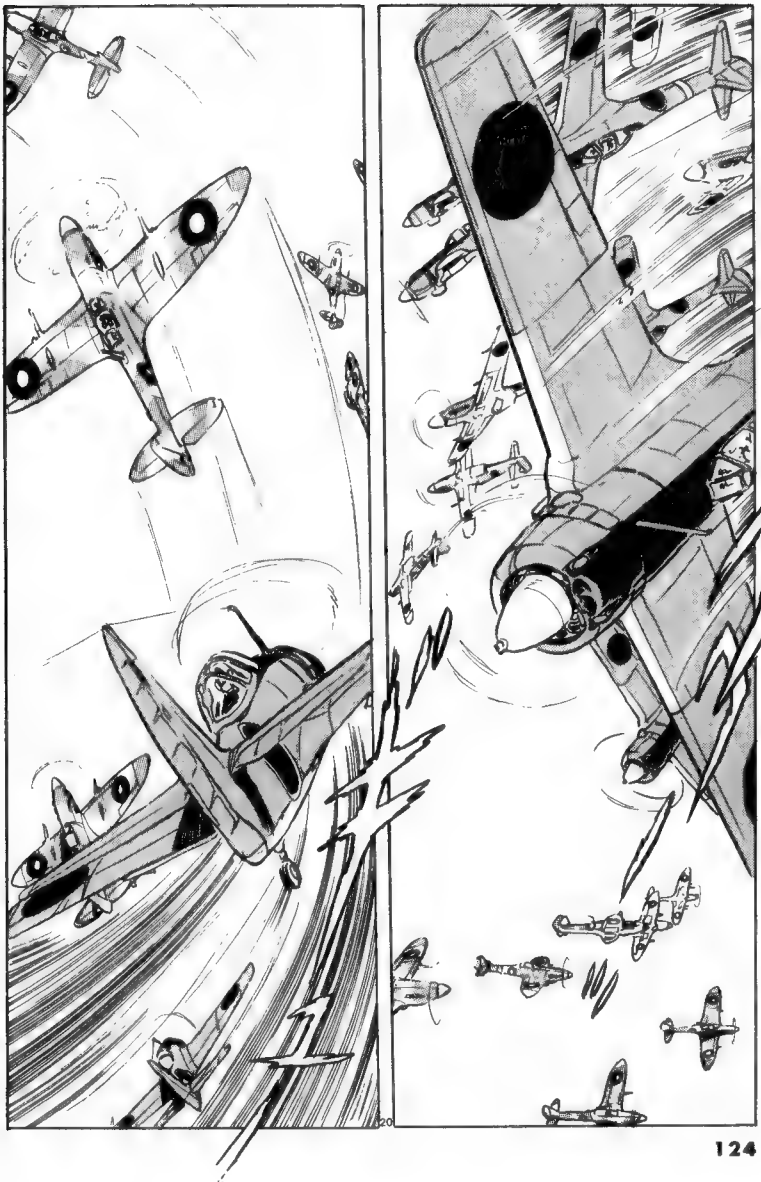
WHICH WE'LL HAVE TO ENJOY WHILE IT LASTS, SIR.
AND NOW TO FLY OFF TO OUR SHINING MOMENT OF GLORY!
BECAUSE GLORY IS AN ILLUSION OR SO THEY SAY.
THEN WE'D BETTER HURRY AND CATCH THIS MOMENT OF GLORY BEFORE IT'S GONE!
GIVE IT EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT, EVERYONE!! LET'S GO!!!
ALL RIGHT, EVERYONE! YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS!!!
16
NO! THEY CAN'T POSSIBLY WIN! DON'T! COMMANDER! SHIMA-KAMI! DON'T!!!


HEY, YOU'RE RIGHT! WHAT THE HELL?! WE'VE GOT BETTER VISION, BETTER REFLEXES, AND ALL THAT! WE WANT TO DIE FOR OUR COUNTRY TOO!!
HEY! DO YOU NOTICE? THEY LEFT BEHIND ALL OF THE YOUNG PILOTS! ONLY THE OLDER ONES ARE FLYING!!
I KNOW.
THEY WANT YOU TO LIVE FOR YOUR COUNTRY, OTSUKI, NOT DIE FOR IT. WAY TOO MANY HAVE DIED ALREADY.
PLEASE SIR! DON'T LEAVE US BEHIND! WE WANT TO GO TOO!
17
YOU'RE NEVER COMING BACK, ARE YOU? AND THOSE WORDS I HEARD LAST NIGHT ... HOW DID IT KNOW? HOW COULD IT HAVE FOUND OUT?

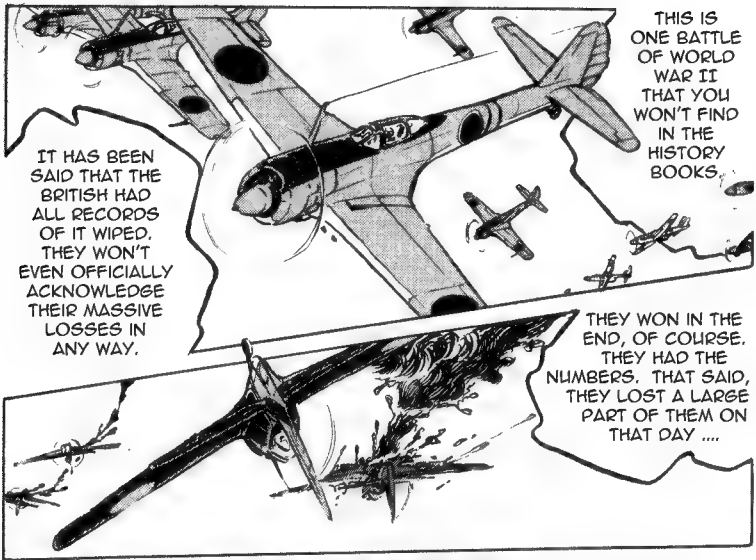

READ YOU LOUD AND CLEAR, SIR,
TYPHOON LEADER TO TYPHOON TWO. ARE YOU THERE, SHIMAYAMA?
YES ... I'M ENJOYING IT!
EXCELLENT WEATHER AND VISIBILITY.
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, SIR, I THOUGHT IT WAS PATHETIC.
YOU HEARD THE EMPEROR'S SURRENDER ORDER ON THE 15TH?*
THE YOUNG PEOPLE BACK THERE, MAYBE. US? NO. I CHOOSE TO DIE FOR MY BELOVED IMPERIAL JAPAN, JUST AS I KNOW YOU DO.
I CAN NEVER ACCEPT IT, JUST AS I KNOW THE REST OF US CAN'T. I'M TOO SET IN MY WAYS.
I DON'T THINK THE ALLIES WILL SEE IT THAT WAY, SIR, BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW WE'RE ALL WITH YOU ON THIS.
BESIDES, WE HAVEN'T YET SURRENDERED TO THE BRITISH. OFFICIALLY WE'RE STILL AT WAR WITH THEM.
18
SORE NA! (THAT'S RIGHT!)
WE CHOOSE TO DIE NOT AS VICTIMS OF A FORCED SURRENDER, BUT AS TRUE FIGHTING MEN OF THE JAPANESE IMPERIAL ARMY AIR CORPS!!!
IT HAS BEEN SAID, SIR, THAT A TRUE SAMURAI CHOOSES WHEN AND WHERE TO DIE. TODAY AND HERE IS OUR WHERE AND WHEN.

(*) AUGUST 15, 1945

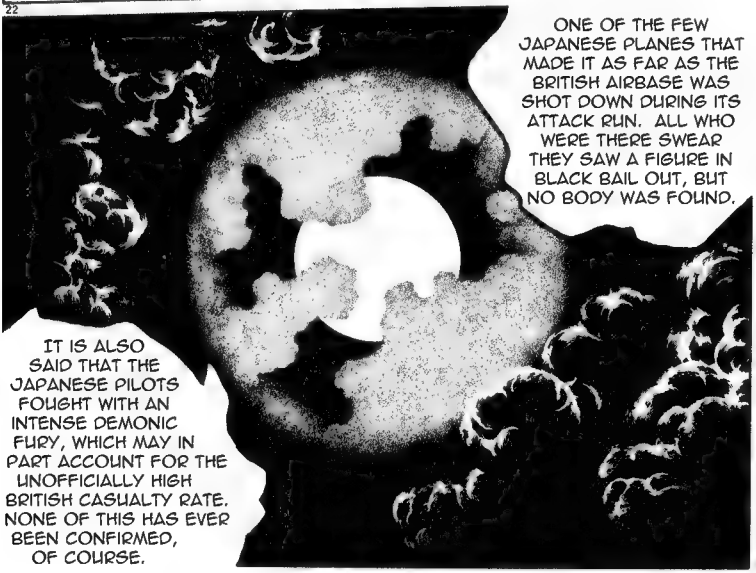

SIR! THE RISING SUN IS COMING OVER THE MOUNTANS TO ALSO BID US FAREWELL!
HERE THEY COME!
19
MAY YOUR LIVES AFTER THE WAR BE HAPPY ONES, JUST AS HAPPY AS OUR DEATHS ARE GOING TO BE!!!
I BID FAREWELL TO THE YOUNG ONES BACK AT BASE!



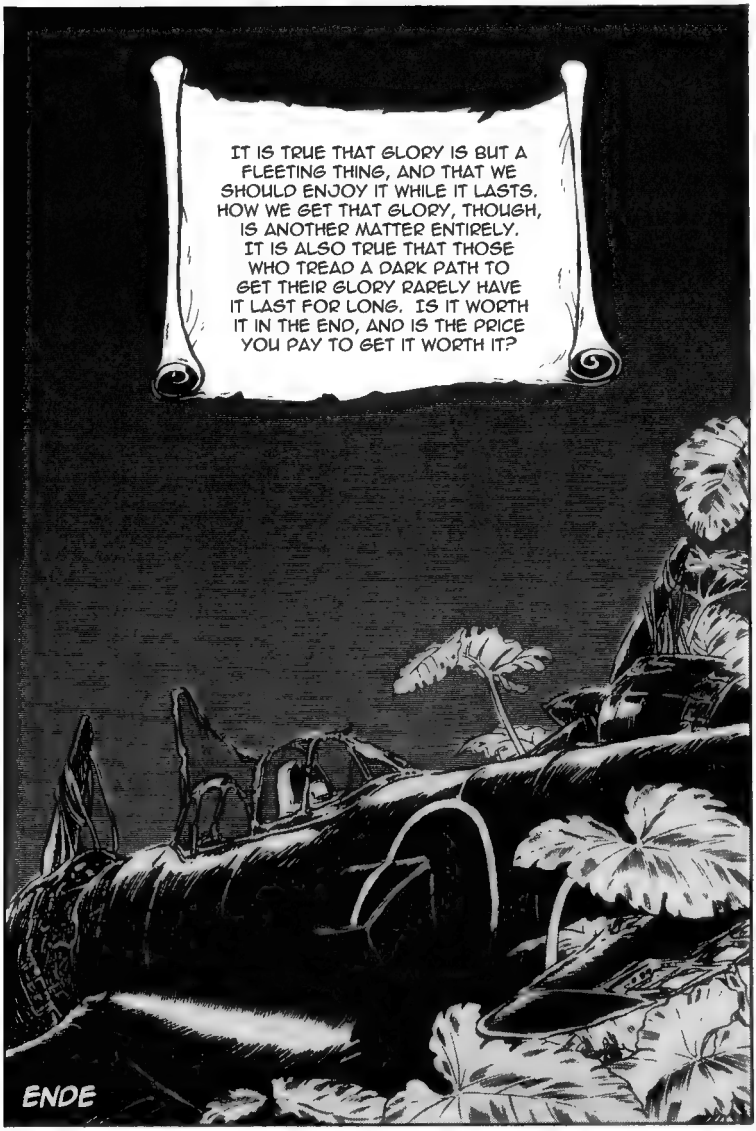
MORE TARGETS MAKE FOR EASIER KILLS! NOW LET'S---
DAMN! THERE'S SPIFIRES ALL OVER THE FUCKIN' PLACE!


IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE BRITISH HAD ALL RECORDS OF IT WIPED. THEY WON'T EVEN OFFICIALLY ACKNOWLEDGE THEIR MASSIVE LOSSES IN ANY WAY.
THIS IS ONE BATTLE OF WORLD WAR II THAT YOU WON'T FIND IN THE HISTORY BOOKS.
THEY WON IN THE END, OF COURSE. THEY HAD THE NUMBERS. THAT SAID, THEY LOST A LARGE PART OF THEM ON THAT DAY ....

22

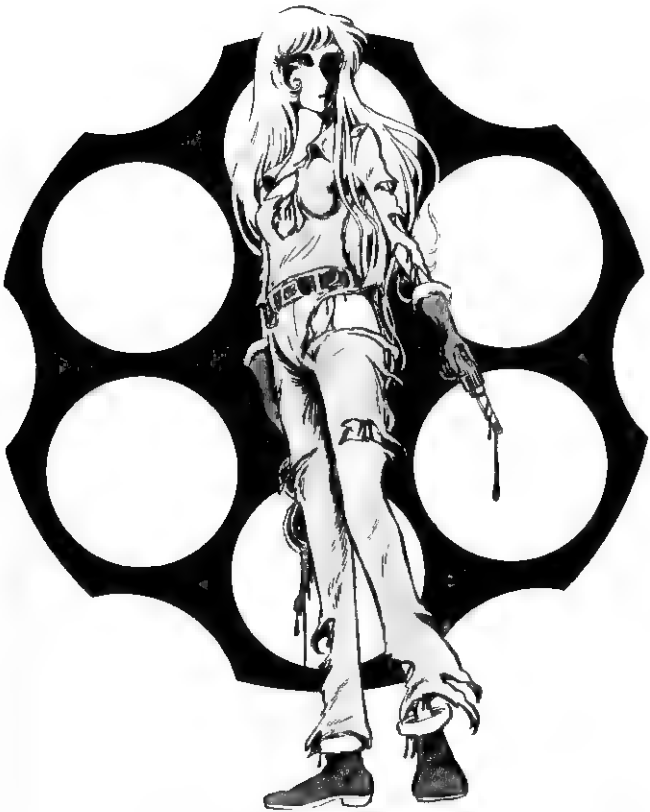

ONE OF THE FEW JAPANESE PLANES THAT MADE IT AS FAR AS THE BRITISH AIRBASE WAS SHOT DOWN DURING ITS ATTACK RUN. ALL WHO WERE THERE SWEAR THEY SAW A FIGURE IN BLACK BAIL OUT, BUT NO BODY WAS FOUND.
IT IS ALSO SAID THAT THE JAPANESE PILOTS FOUGHT WITH AN INTENSE DEMONIC FURY, WHICH MAY IN PART ACCOUNT FOR THE UNOFFICIALLY HIGH BRITISH CASUALTY RATE. NONE OF THIS HAS EVER BEEN CONFIRMED, OF COURSE.

IT IS SAID THAT WHEN THE NIGHT IS RIGHT YOU CAN SEE THE DEMONS WHO FOUGHT THAT LAST BATTLE GOING TO THE GHOSTS OF THEIR PLANES. SO IT IS SAID.
NONE OF THE SENIOR JAPANESE PILOTS RETURNED FROM THAT ACTION, AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER THOSE WHO SURVIVED AT THE AIRBASE SURRENDERED.
23


IT IS TRUE THAT GLORY IS BUT A FLEETING THING, AND THAT WE SHOULD ENJOY IT WHILE IT LASTS. HOW WE GET THAT GLORY, THOUGH, IS ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT THOSE WHO TREAD A DARK PATH TO GET THEIR GLORY RARELY HAVE IT LAST FOR LONG. IS IT WORTH IT IN THE END, AND IS THE PRICE YOU PAY TO GET IT WORTH IT?
ENDE

HARD METAL

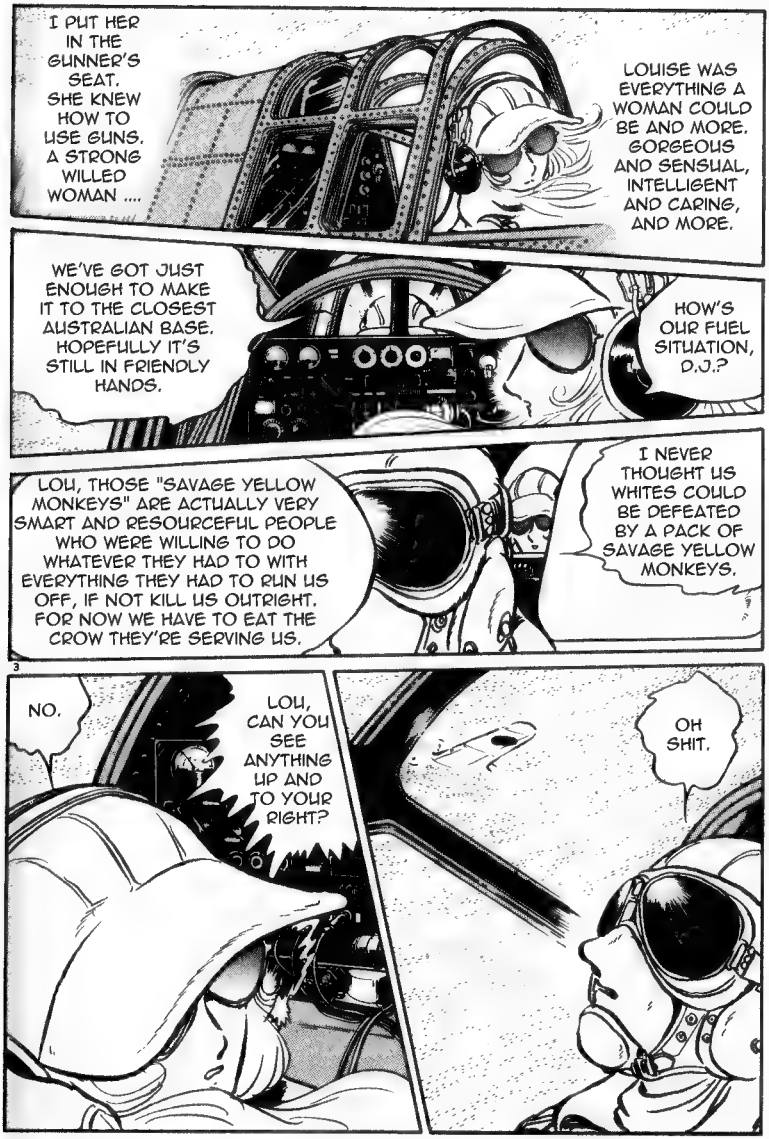
THE SIX SHOT CIVILIZATION

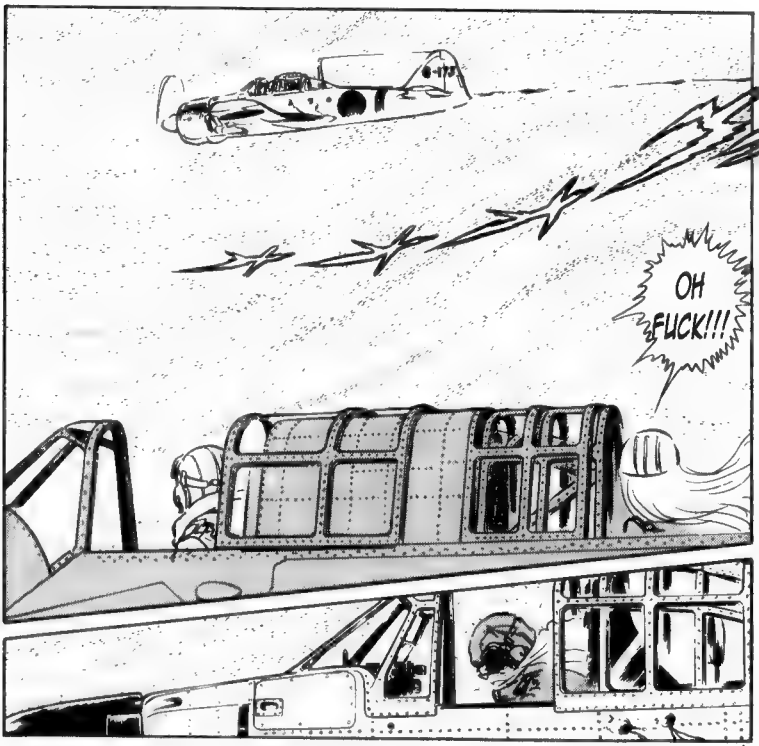


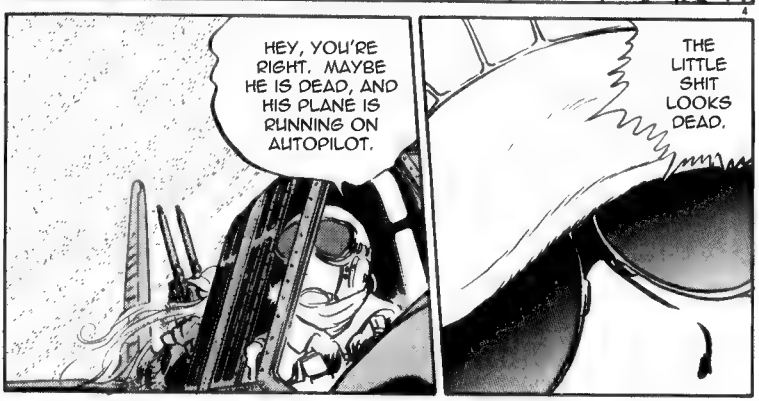
I'VE LIVED A GOOD LIFE. I WAS FORTUNATE TO FIND A WOMAN WHO LOVED ME, I LOVED HER IN TURN, AND WE HAD CHILDREN WHO IN TURN GAVE THE BOTH OF US GRANDCHILDREN. NOW I NEAR THE END OF MY WONDERFUL LIFE, AND I OWE IT ALL TO A FRIEND I MADE DURING THE WAR. WELL, MAYBE NOT A FRIEND IN THE STRICTEST SENSE ....

MY NAME IS D.J. HAWKINS. I WAS A NAVY PILOT DURING WORLD WAR II. IN EARLY 1942 I WAS AMONG THOSE FLEEING THE PHILIPPINES IN THE FACE OF AN INVADING JAPANESE ARMY. I HAD MY PLANE, AND I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO FIND MY GIRL AND TAKE HER WITH ME BEFORE LEAVING ....

2

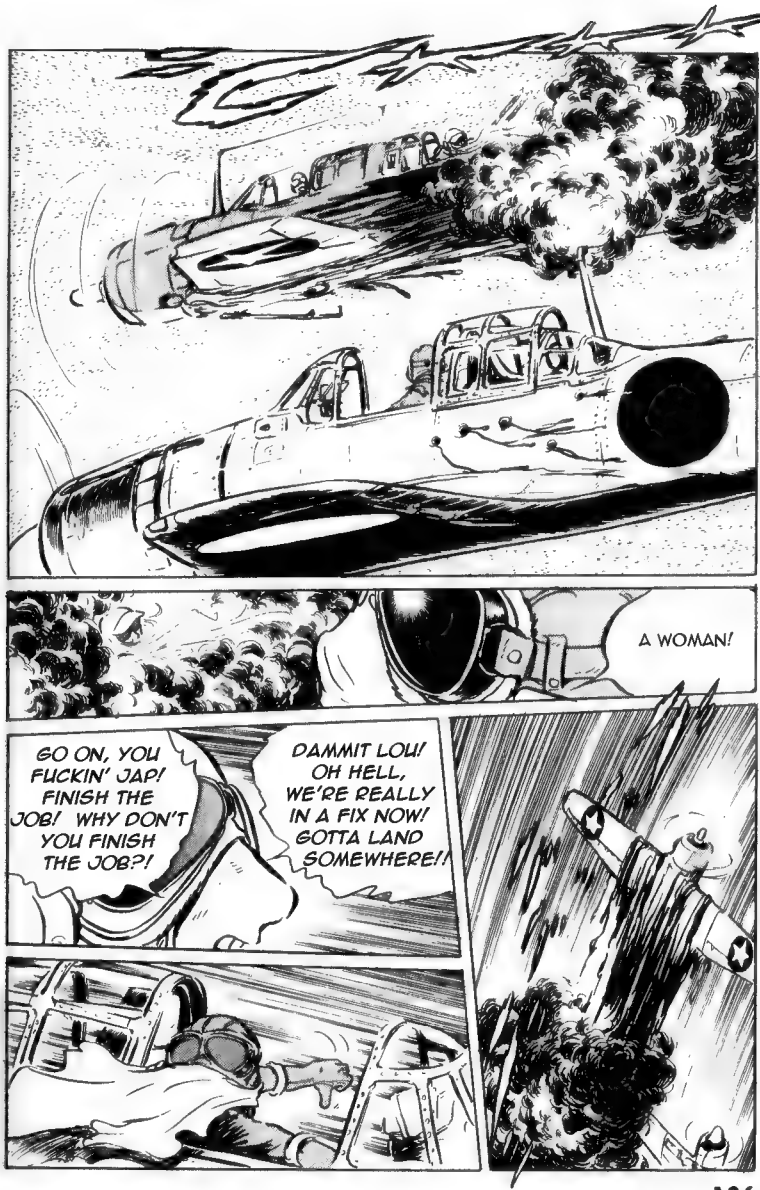

I PUT HER IN THE GUNNER'S SEAT. SHE KNEW HOW TO USE GUNS. A STRONG WILLED WOMAN ....
LOUISE WAS EVERYTHING A WOMAN COULD BE AND MORE. GORGEOUS AND SENSUAL, INTELLIGENT AND CARING, AND MORE.
WE'VE GOT JUST ENOUGH TO MAKE IT TO THE CLOSEST AUSTRALIAN BASE. HOPEFULLY IT'S STILL IN FRIENDLY HANDS.
HOW'S OUR FUEL SITUATION, D.J.?
LOU, THOSE "SAVAGE YELLOW MONKEYS" ARE ACTUALLY VERY SMART AND RESOURCEFUL PEOPLE WHO WERE WILLING TO DO WHATEVER THEY HAD TO WITH EVERYTHING THEY HAD TO RUN US OFF, IF NOT KILL US OUTRIGHT. FOR NOW WE HAVE TO EAT THE CROW THEY'RE SERVING US.
I NEVER THOUGHT US WHITES COULD BE DEFEATED BY A PACK OF SAVAGE YELLOW MONKEYS.
3
NO.
LOU, CAN YOU SEE ANYTHING UP AND TO YOUR RIGHT?
OH SHIT.


OH FUCK!!!


HEY, YOU'RE RIGHT. MAYBE HE IS DEAD, AND HIS PLANE IS RUNNING ON AUTOPILOT.
THE LITTLE SHIT LOOKS DEAD.

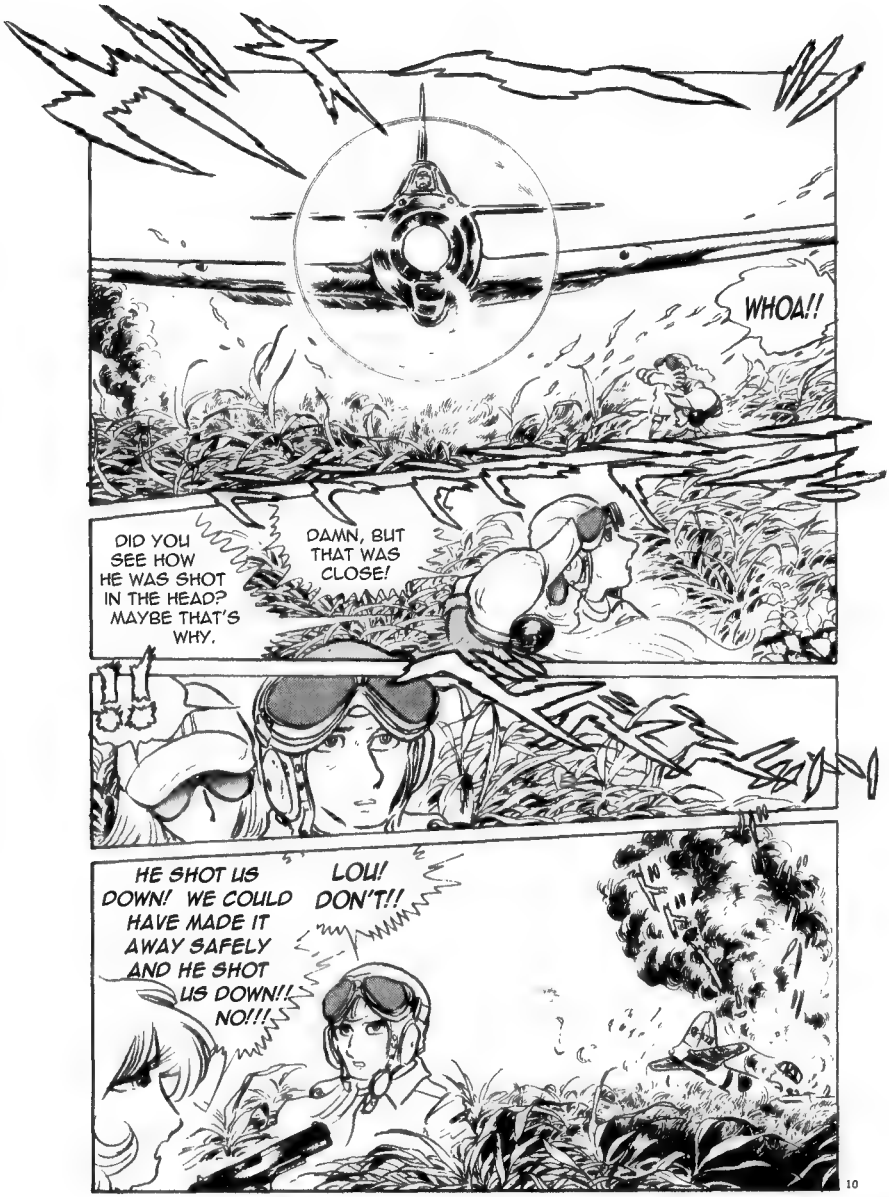
I CAN'T STAND IT ANY MORE, D.J.! I LOST MY HOME TO THOSE STINKING YELLOW RATS! I'VE GOT TO VENT SOMEHOW!
I MAY BE SHOOTING DOWN A DEAD MAN, BUT HE'S A DEAD YELLOW BASTARD!! HERE'S TO YOU!!!
LOU! WHAT THE HELL?! THAT'S A FIGHTER! IF HE'S NOT DEAD--

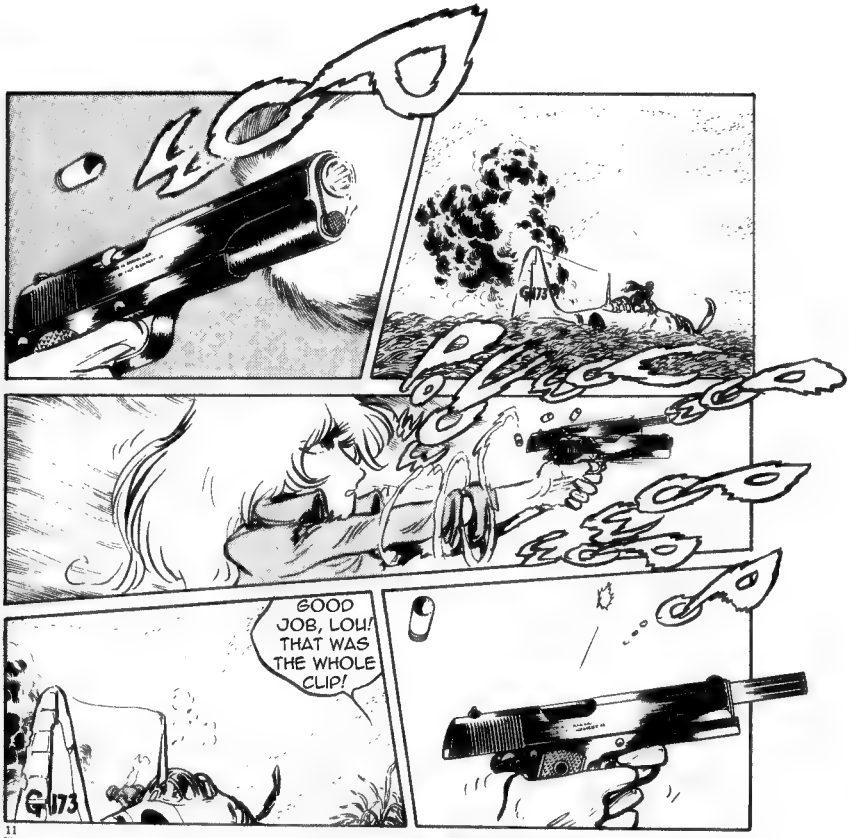
6
LOU!!!


A WOMAN!
GO ON, YOU FUCKIN' JAP! FINISH THE JOB! WHY DON'T YOU FINISH THE JOB?!
DAMMIT LOU! OH HELL, WE'RE REALLY IN A FIX NOW! GOTTA LAND SOMEWHERE!!

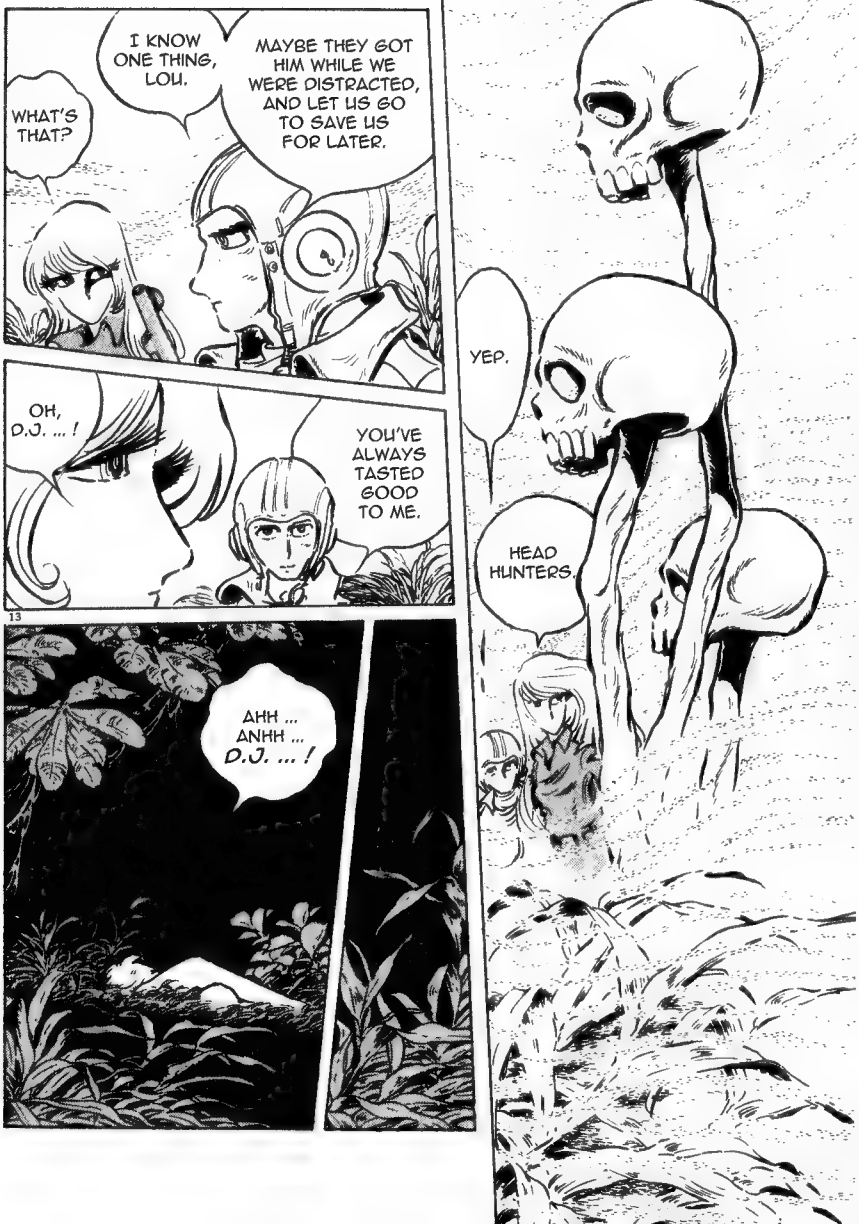
HE WANTS ME TO FOLLOW HIM DOWN TO THAT CLEARING!
... OOHHH ... D.J. ... DON'T DO IT ... THAT ISLAND IS PROBABLY CRAWLING WITH THOSE FILTHY SCUMBAGS!
I DON'T HAVE A CHOICE IF WE WANT ANY CHANCE TO LIVE, LOU!
OKAY THEN ... BUT NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS ... I STILL LOVE YOU.

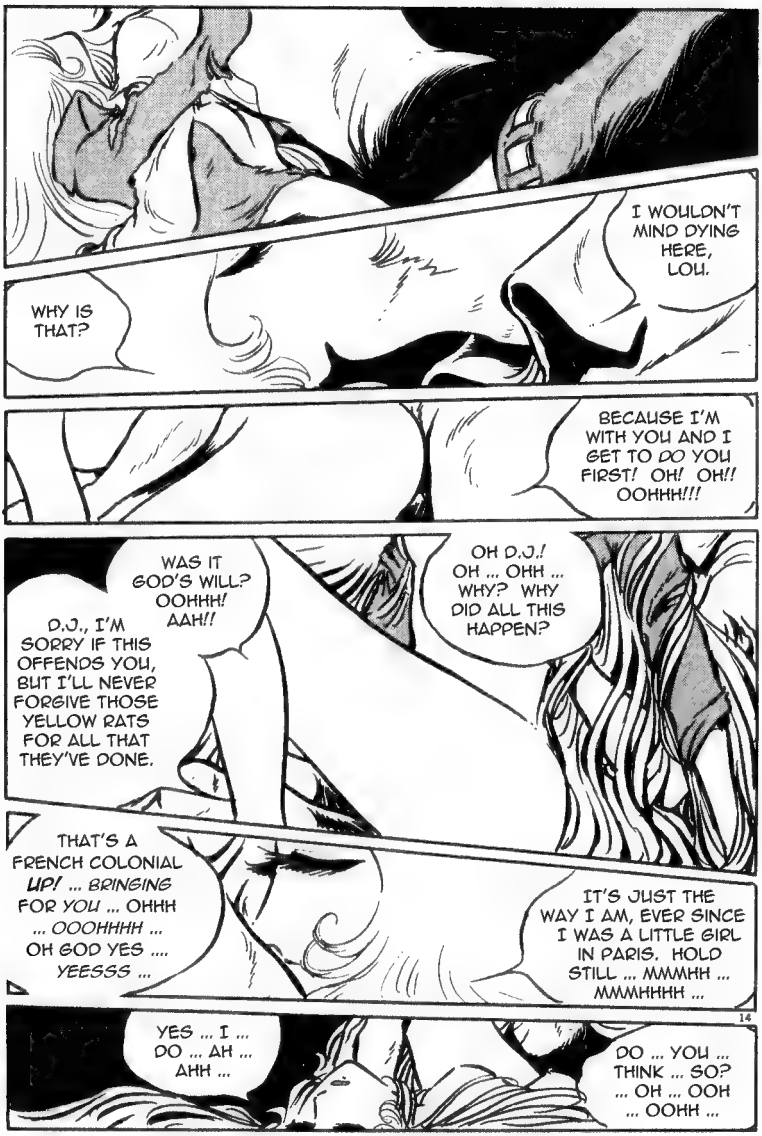
9
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, LOU?
I THINK SO. JUST A FEW BURNS.
HE'S COMING IN TOO.


WHOA!!
DAMN, BUT THAT WAS CLOSE!
DID YOU SEE HOW HE WAS SHOT IN THE HEAD? MAYBE THAT'S WHY.
LOU! DON'T!!
HE SHOT US DOWN! WE COULD HAVE MADE IT AWAY SAFELY AND HE SHOT US DOWN!! NO!!!
10


GOOD JOB, LOU! THAT WAS THE WHOLE CLIP!
G-173
11
I ONLY WANT TO KNOW ONE THING. DID I KILL THAT YELLOW MONKEY?
YOU'VE JUST CUT OUR CHANCES FOR SURVIVAL IN HALF, LOU. NOW CALM DOWN SO WE CAN THINK ABOUT HOW WE'RE GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS FIX!
CALM DOWN!

THAT'S AS FAR AS YOU GO, D.J. I DON'T NEED A LECTURE ON RACE.
LOU, I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL BUT IF YOU DON'T CURB YOUR PREJUDICE YOU MAY GET US KILLED.
NO WAY TO TELL FROM HERE. HIS BODY FELL OVER THE FAR SIDE OF HIS PLANE.
I ... IT'S OUT OF BULLETS.
THEN ASK YOUR GUN.
AND I'VE ONLY GOT SIX IN THIS FLIGHT REVOLVER, SO THAT'S ACTUALLY LESS THAN HALF.
12
D.J.!
I WONDER WHERE HE WENT IN SO SHORT A--
WE'D BETTER GET MOVING.
UH-OH. HE'S STILL ALIVE. NO SIGN OF A BODY.


I KNOW ONE THING, LOU.
MAYBE THEY GOT HIM WHILE WE WERE DISTRACTED, AND LET US GO TO SAVE US FOR LATER.
WHAT'S THAT?
OH, D.J. ... !
YOU'VE ALWAYS TASTED GOOD TO ME.
13
AHH ... ANHH ... D.J. ... !
YEP.
HEAD HUNTERS.


I WOULDN'T MIND DYING HERE, LOU.
WHY IS THAT?
BECAUSE I'M WITH YOU AND I GET TO DO YOU FIRST! OH! OH!! OOHHH!!!
OH D.J.! OH ... OHH ... WHY? WHY DID ALL THIS HAPPEN?
WAS IT GOD'S WILL? OOHHH! AAH!!
D.J., I'M SORRY IF THIS OFFENDS YOU, BUT I'LL NEVER FORGIVE THOSE YELLOW RATS FOR ALL THAT THEY'VE DONE.
IT'S JUST THE WAY I AM, EVER SINCE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL IN PARIS. HOLD STILL ... MMMHH ... MMMHHHH ...
THAT'S A FRENCH COLONIAL UP! ... BRINGING FOR YOU ... OHHH ... OOOHHHH ... OH GOD YES .... YEESSS ...
14
YES ... I ... DO ... AH ... AHH ...
DO ... YOU ... THINK ... SO? ... OH ... OOH ... OOHH ...

LOOKS LIKE A FLIGHT OF JAPANESE BOMBERS HEADING NORTH, PROBABLY TO SUPPORT THE INVASION. OH, THE IRONY.
THE WHITE MAN CONQUERED LAST CENTURY AND THE YELLOW MAN IN THIS.
WHAT'S THAT SOUND? AIRPLANES!
HE MIGHT STILL BE OUT THERE SOMEWHERE. HE MIGHT EVEN HAVE ENJOYED THE SHOW.
OH, D.J. ... ... SIX SHOTS. THAT'S IT.
THOSE AREN'T FIREFLIES. THEY'RE PEOPLE.
BEFORE YOU USE THAT, TAKE A LOOK AROUND.
DON'T MOVE!
AHH!!
15

THOSE ARE THE NATIVES OF THIS ISLAND. YOU'VE ALREADY SEEN THE EVIDENCE OF ONE OF THEIR FAVORITE PASTTIMES. DO YOU REALLY WANT TO DRAW THEIR ATTENTION?
DAMN .... SO MANY!
THEY'LL BE THE ONES SENDING OUT THAT SEARCH PARTY.
THOSE AIRPLANES ... THEY MUST HAVE COME FROM AN AIRFIELD NEARBY.
TRUE ENOUGH.
AND YOUR PEOPLE MOST LIKELY ALREADY HAVE A SEARCH PARTY OUT.
CORRECT. IT'S ON THE SOUTH END OF THIS ISLAND, WHICH WE CONTROL.
IT WAS A CIVILIAN FIELD USED MAINLY FOR REFUELING BETWEEN FLIGHTS!*
BELBARRA AIRFIELD! IT'S GOT TO BE! I REMEMBER FROM BEFORE THE WAR!
16
YES. I'M HUMAN, JUST LIKE YOU. I DON'T MIND EVEN AN EMEMY FOR COMPANY.
YOU'VE BEEN WATCHING US THIS WHOLE TIME, HAVEN'T YOU?

(*) THINK IN TERMS OF THE WORLD WAR II ERA, WITH OLDER TURBOPROP AIRCRAFT WITH LESS EFFICIENT ENGINES AND WITH LESS RANGE AND ENDURANCE THAN THOSE OF CURRENT TIMES.

I WANT TO KNOW WHY THE HEAD-HUNTERS HAVEN'T ATTACKED.
YOU'RE ONE OF THEM, AREN'T YOU?
NO, LOU. I'M NOT ONE OF THEM. DON'T YOU KNOW?
YOU SAID IT YOURSELF. I'M A DEAD MAN ...
HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME, YOU FUCKING YELLOW RAT?!
... AND BULLETS CAN'T HARM DEAD MEN.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
IF YOU'RE DEAD THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE?
!!
LIKE I SAID, I AM - OR WAS - HUMAN. I ENJOY THE COMPANY EVEN OF AN ENEMY.
WELL, I HOPE YOU GOT YOUR JOLLIES WATCHING US EARLIER. IT MAKES ME SICK TO THINK YOU WERE THERE.
REALLY ... ?
I THOUGHT IT WAS BEAUTIFUL. THE LOVE OF A MAN AND WOMAN WHO LOVE EACH OTHER.
17

I WAS LT. COMMANDER MAMORU FUJITA, IMPERIAL JAPANESE NAVY AIR CORPS.
... AND THIS IS MY GIRLFRIEND LOU, A STRONG-WILLED PRODUCT OF FRENCH COLONIAL EXTRACTION. AND YOU ARE?
WE MAY AS WELL GET THIS OUT OF THE WAY. I'M LIEUTENANT D.J. HAWKINS, U.S. NAVY ...
YOU HAVEN'T BEEN LISTENING, HAVE YOU LOU? BESIDES, ANOTHER WOULD JUST TAKE MY PLACE.
LET'S TAKE HIM OUT WHILE WE'VE GOT HIM! THAT WAY THEY'LL BE ONE SQUADRON LEADER LESS!
THAT MEANS YOU'RE A SQUADRON LEADER! HOLY COW!
THEN CONSIDER THIS. EVEN IF THAT WERE TRUE, WHERE WOULD YOU GET AN AIRPLANE BIG ENOUGH FOR THE THREE OF US?
I STILL DON'T BELIEVE YOU'RE DEAD.
WE COULD SNEAK IN, STEAL A TRANSPORT PLANE, THEN FLY OUT WITH HIM WITH US!
WHY ... AT BELBARRA AIRFIELD, THAT'S WHERE!
WELL I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOUR PEOPLE BUT DREAMS ARE IMPORTANT TO US! AS LONG AS WE CAN WE HAVE TO TRY!!
IT'S A PIPE DREAM.
HA-HA-HA-HA-HAH. YOU'D NEVER MAKE IT. THE AIRFIELD IS TOO WELL GUARDED.

I ALSO DREAM OF MY HOMELAND, AND IT'S ALSO ONE TO WHICH I CAN NEVER RETURN THANKS TO ALL OF YOU YELLOW MOTHER FUCKERS.
AS FOR ME I DREAM OF A HOMELAND TO WHICH I CAN NEVER RETURN.
TELL ME, LOU. DID YOU TRULY LOVE IT WHILE YOU WERE THERE OR DID YOU TAKE IT FOR GRANTED?
I LOVED MY HOMELAND, JUST AS MUCH AS YOU DO YOURS IF NOT MORE!
9

SHIT.
BE CAREFUL, D.J. YOU'VE ONLY GOT ONE SHOT LEFT.
KOTICHI! KOTICHI! (OVER HERE! THIS WAY!)
THEY'VE FOUND US!
YOU'RE GOING TO BE OUR HOSTAGE! THEY WON'T SHOOT A LIEUTENANT COMMANDER!
WHICH MEANS ...

THEN AGAIN, WITH ONLY ONE SHOT LEFT ...
D.J.! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!
HERE. I'M PUTTING OUR LIVES IN YOUR HANDS.
21
YARIMASHITA NE! RYOHO-TOMO SHITOMEMASHITA YO! O MIGOTODESU! (SIR! YOU CAUGHT THEM BOTH! GOOD JOB, SIR!)
AH, THERE YOU ARE.
ARIGATO. IKIMASU. (THANKS. LET'S GO)

AIRPORT
1938
... IS FLIGHT READY AND HAS ENOUGH FUEL TO GET YOU WHERE YOU WANTED TO GO, IF YOU CAN BOTH FIT IN THE COCKPIT.
THAT OLD P-40 WARHAWK SITTING OVER THERE AT THE EDGE OF THE AIRFIELD ...
SO WHAT NOW?
I'VE EVEN WARMED UP THE ENGINE FOR YOU. IT WILL START ON THE FIRST TRY.
THE SOLDIERS WON'T MISS YOU UNTIL AFTER YOU'VE GONE. I'VE SEEN TO THAT.
22
I WAS TOO PROUD AND CRUEL TO DO SO WHILE I STILL LIVED, BUT NOW ... AND THOSE TWO DESERVE TO LIVE, GIVEN HOW MUCH THEY LOVE EACH OTHER.
AND SO I REDEEM MYSELF.
YOU'RE FREE. GO.

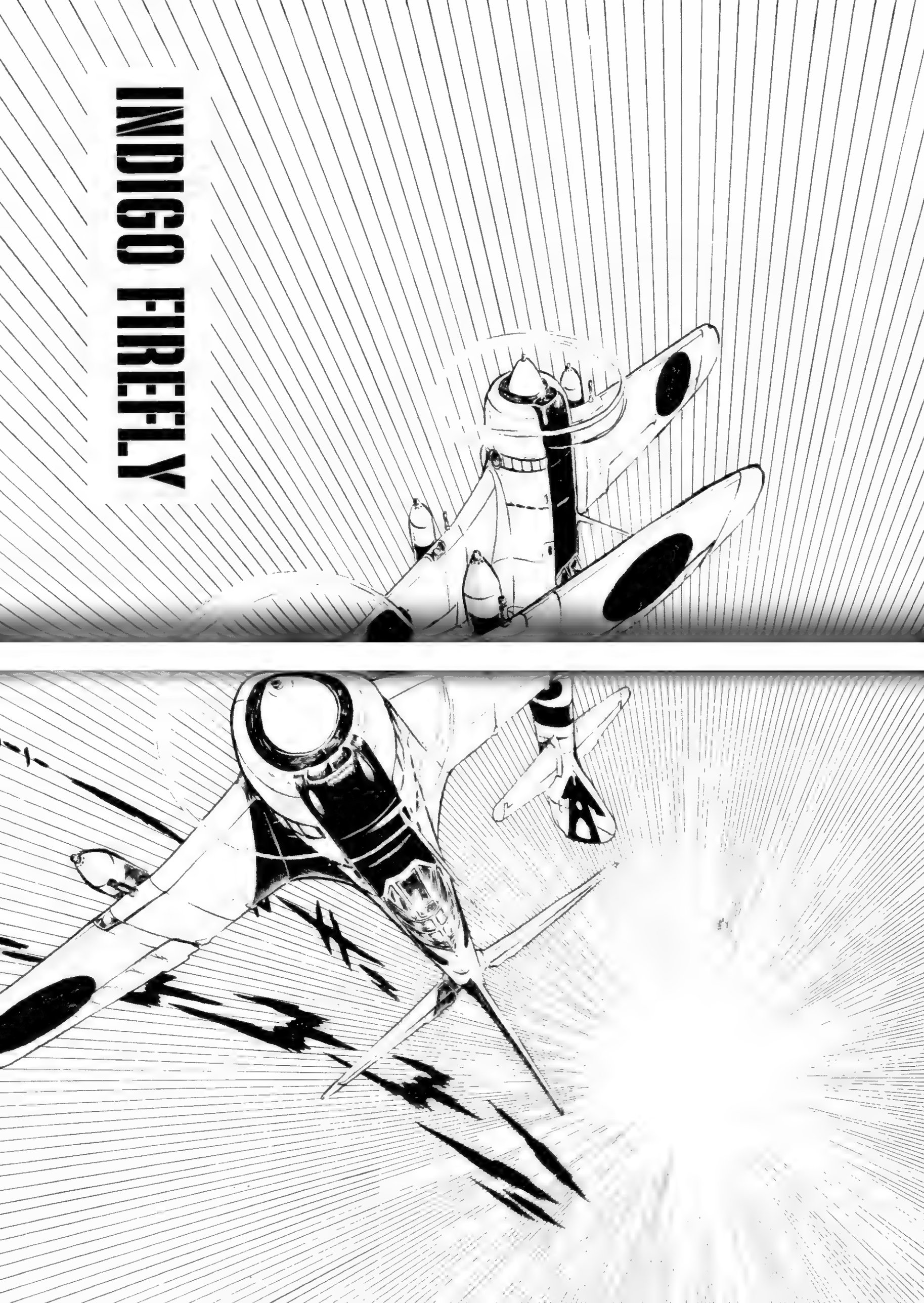
SIR! THE PRISONERS HAVE ESCAPED AND THE LT. COMMANDER IS DEAD!!
WHAT'S THIS?! HIS BODY!! IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S BEEN DEAD FOR A DAY!!!
THE OFFICIAL DEATH CERTIFICATE LISTS THE DEATH OF LT. COMMANDER MAMORU FUJITA AS HAVING HAPPEND ON MARCH 3, 1942. HIS BODY WAS RECOVERED FROM BELBARRA AIRFIELD AND SHOWED NUMEROUS WOUNDS CONSISTENT WITH DEATH IN AERIAL COMBAT. THE FATAL WOUND WAS A BULLET STRIKE TO HIS HEAD, WHICH KILLED HIM INSTANTLY. BOTH LOU AND I KNOW BETTER. WE BOTH KNOW HE WAS AROUND FOR ANOTHER FULL DAY AFTER HIS DEATH ... AND HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR HIS UNEXPECTED AND AMAZING KINDNESS THEN NEITHER OF US WOULD HAVE SURVIVED THE WAR.
ENDE

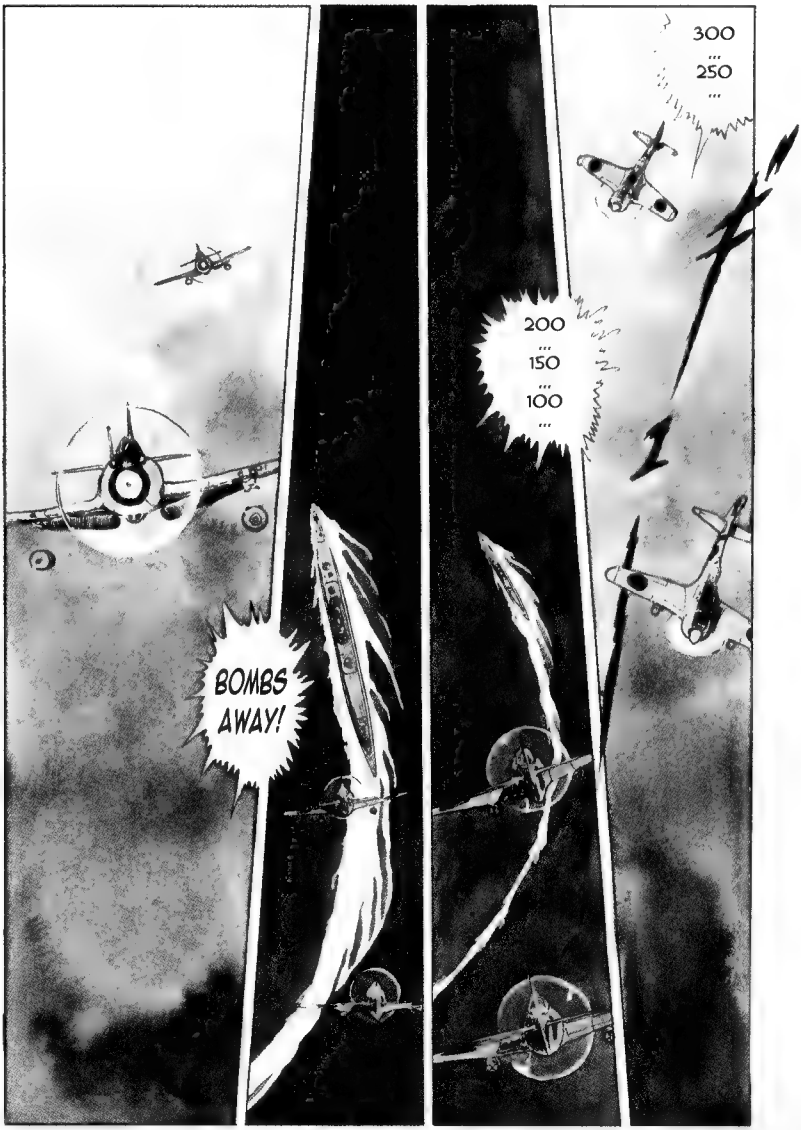
23

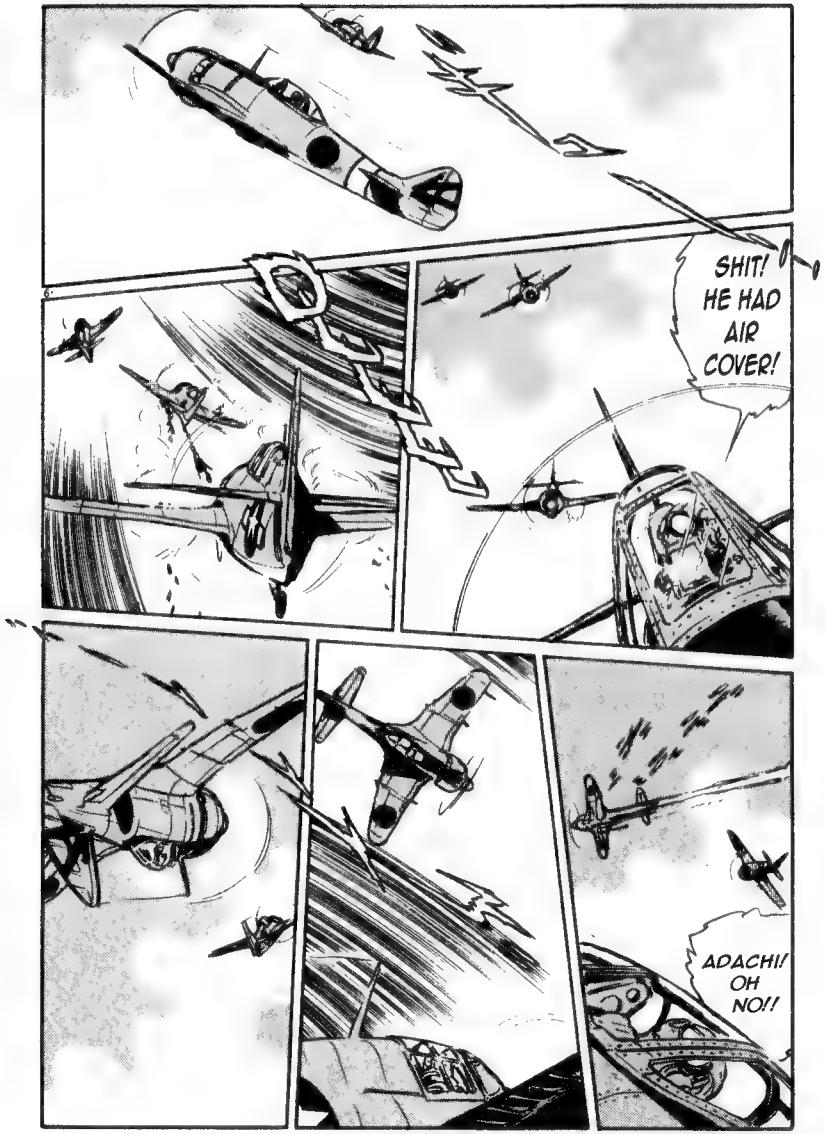
HARD METAL

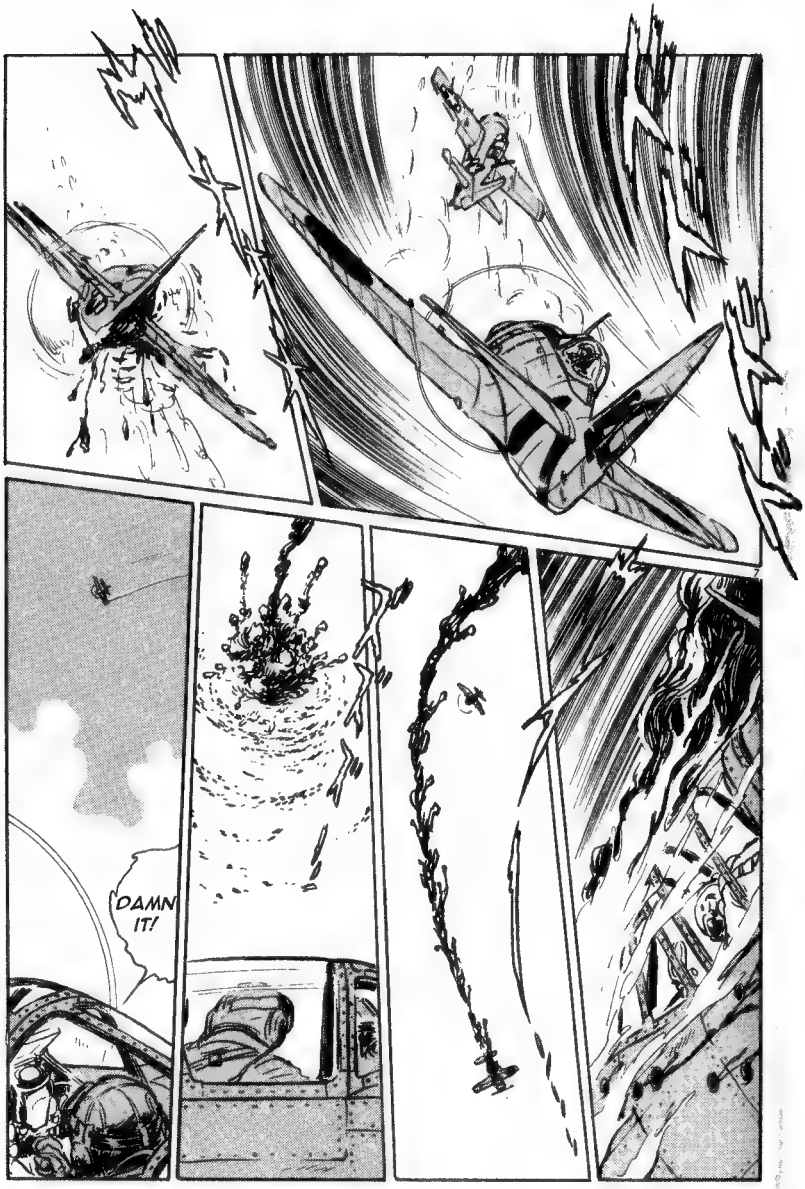
SURFACE WAKES VISIBLE, AHEAD AND LOWER LEFT!
LOOKS LIKE A SURFACED ENEMY SUB! LET'S GO!!

INDIGO FIREFLY

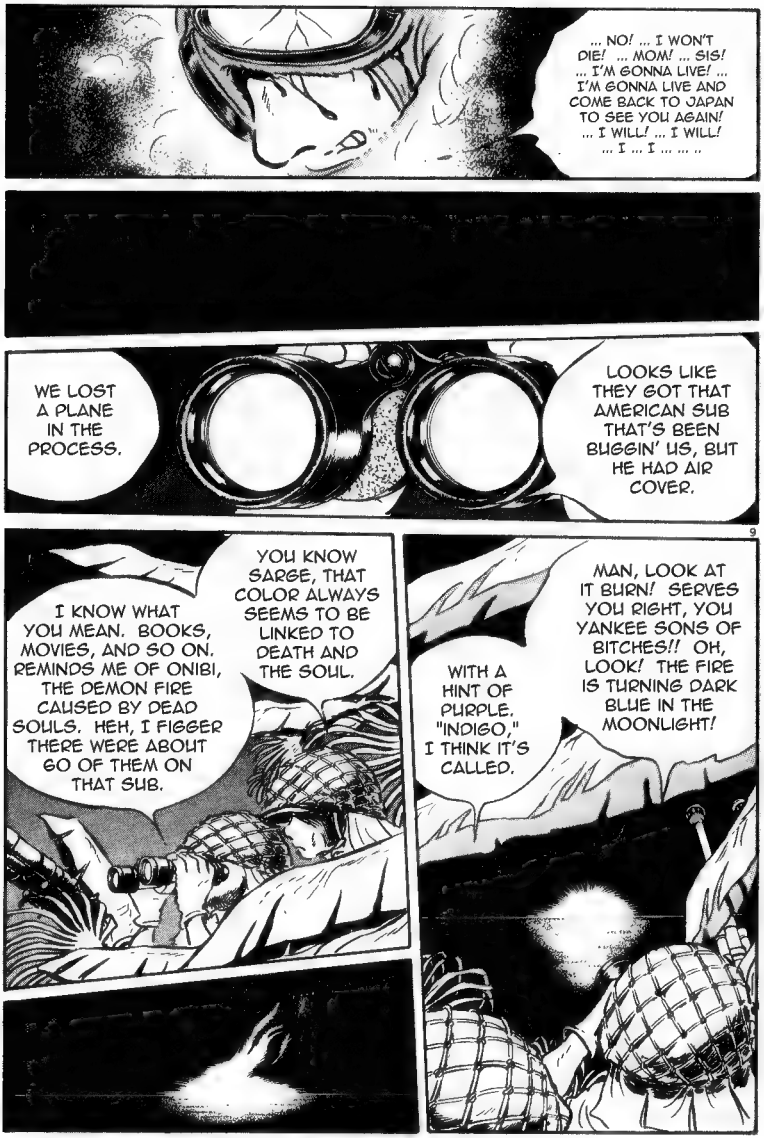



BOMBS AWAY!
200
...
150
...
100
...
300
...
250
...


SHIT! HE HAD AIR COVER!
ADACHI! OH NO!!

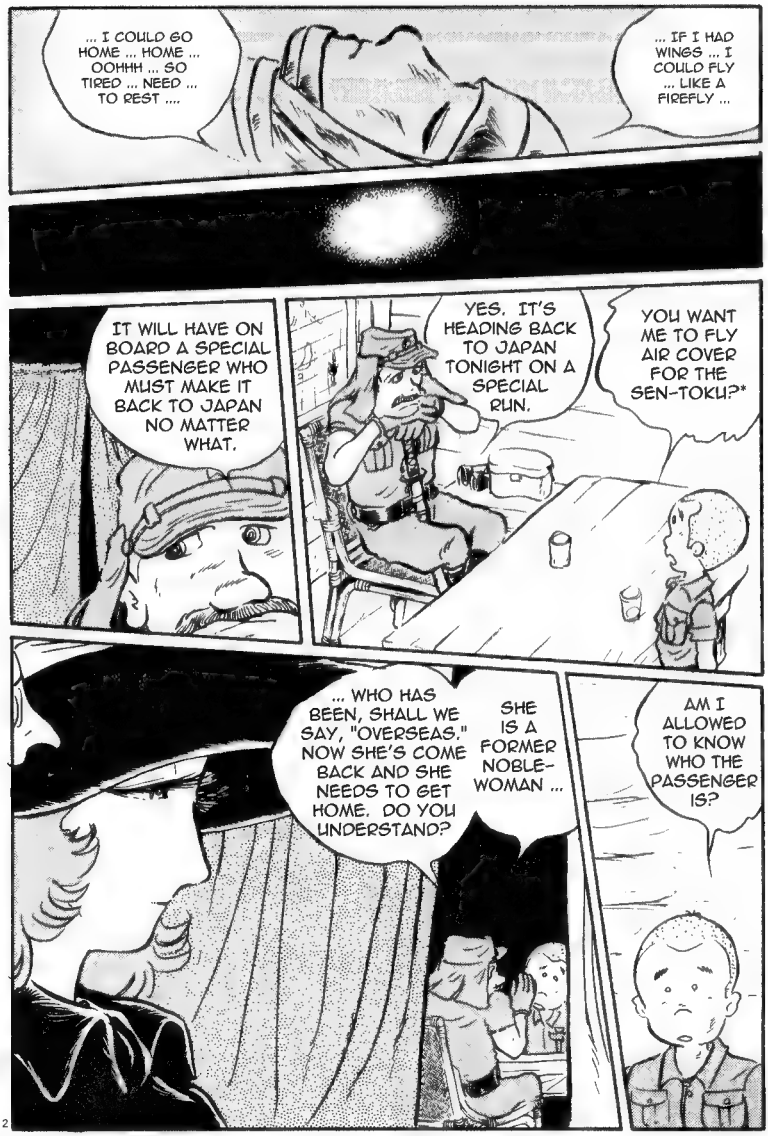

DAMN IT!

I ... I CAN HANDLE IT! ... AS LONG AS SHE HOLDS TOGETHER! ... GO ON! ... GET OUT OF HERE! ... I'LL ... I'LL BE ALL RIGHT! LET THEM KNOW!
ADACHI! HOW BAD OFF ARE YOU?!?
I'M NOT DEAD YET ... NOT BY A LONG SHOT ....
ADACHI!!

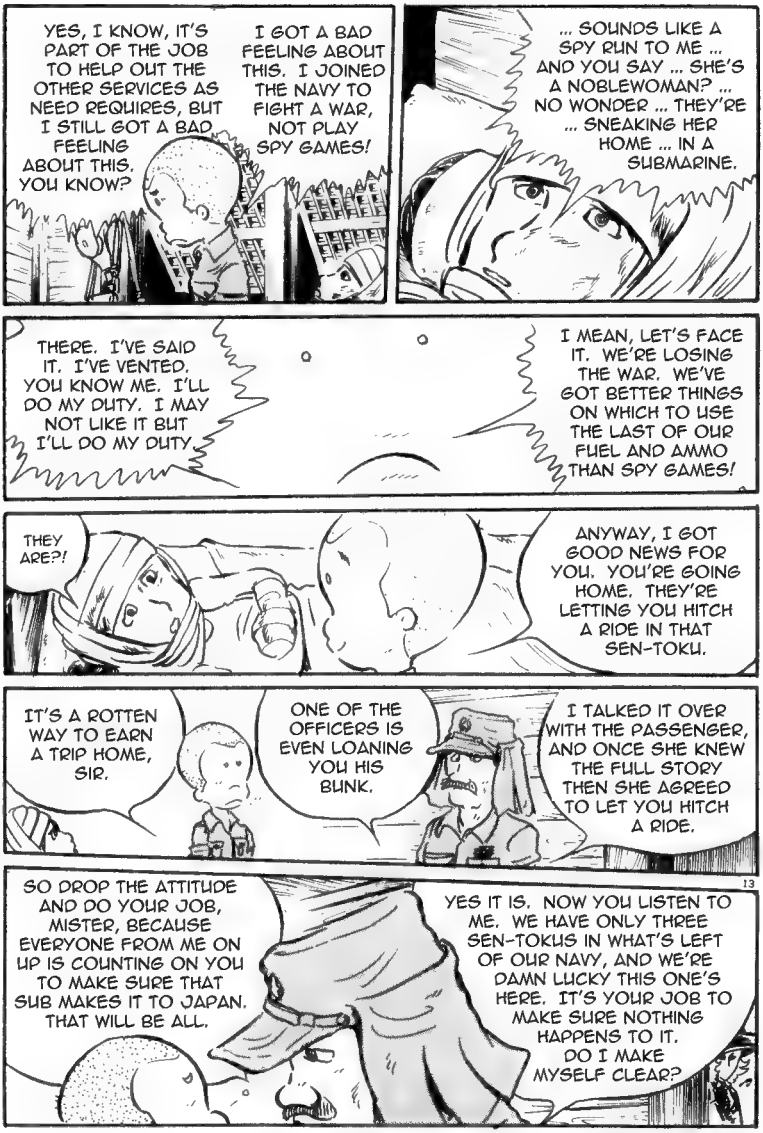

... NO! ... I WON'T DIE! ... MOM! ... SIS! ... I'M GONNA LIVE! ... I'M GONNA LIVE AND COME BACK TO JAPAN TO SEE YOU AGAIN! ... I WILL! ... I WILL! ... I ... I ... .
WE LOST A PLANE IN THE PROCESS.
LOOKS LIKE THEY GOT THAT AMERICAN SUB THAT'S BEEN BUGGIN' US, BUT HE HAD AIR COVER.
9
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. BOOKS, MOVIES, AND SO ON. REMINDS ME OF ONIBI, THE DEMON FIRE CAUSED BY DEAD SOULS. HEH, I FIGGER THERE WERE ABOUT 60 OF THEM ON THAT SUB.
YOU KNOW SARGE, THAT COLOR ALWAYS SEEMS TO BE LINKED TO DEATH AND THE SOUL.
WITH A HINT OF PURPLE. "INDIGO," I THINK IT'S CALLED.
MAN, LOOK AT IT BURN! SERVES YOU RIGHT, YOU YANKEE SONS OF BITCHES!! OH, LOOK! THE FIRE IS TURNING DARK BLUE IN THE MOONLIGHT!

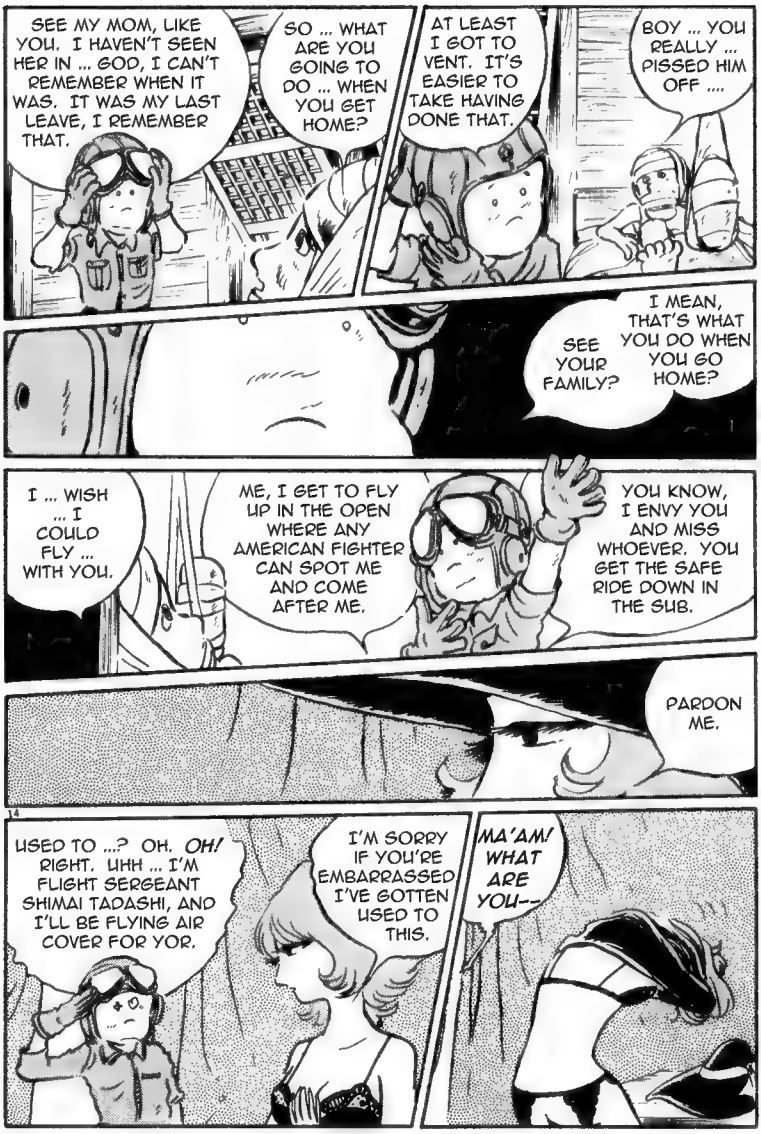
THERE THEY GO, TO THE HOUSES OF THE DEAD.
I HOPE WE DON'T MAKE THAT TRIP ANY TIME SOON, SARGE.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR FAMILY! ADACHI?! ADACHI!!?!
... UUNNHHH ...
ADACHI? ADACHI! DON'T LEAVE ME NOW!
COME ON! HANG IN THERE!
ADA-CHI!

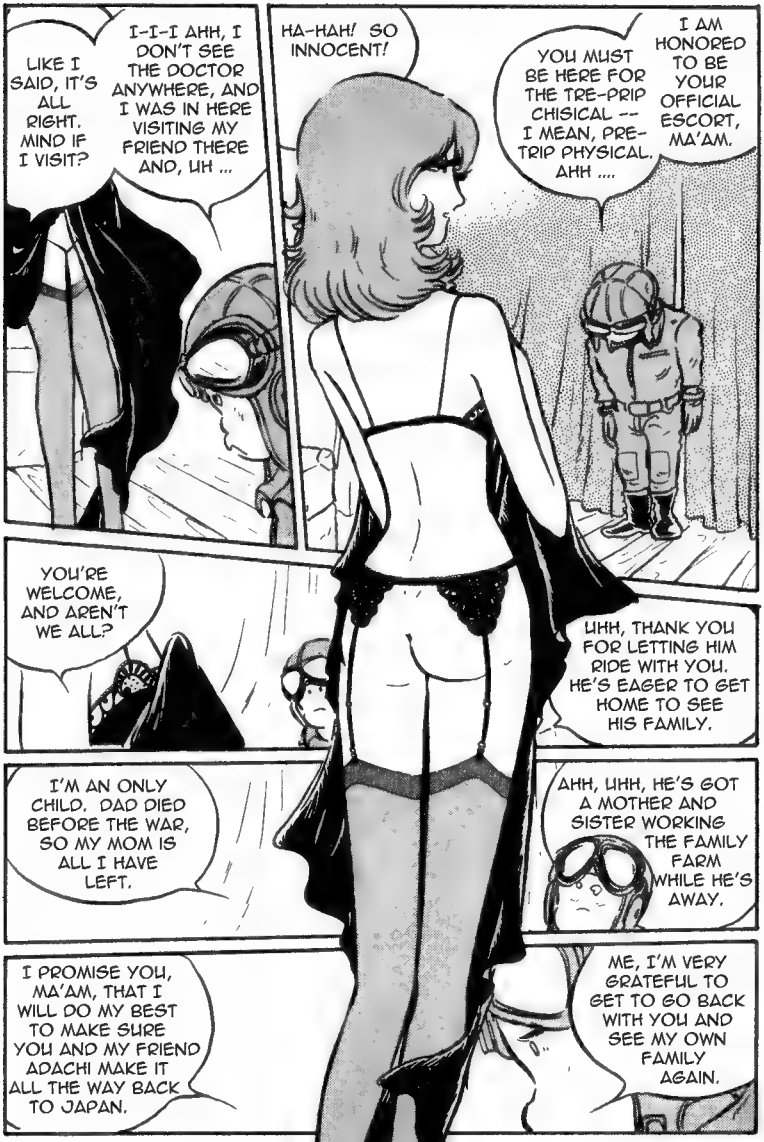
WHAT WAS IT?
... I HAD ... THE MOST ... AMAZING ... DREAM ... WHILE I ... WAS OUT ...
OF COURSE YOU ARE, YOU FUCKIN' SON OF A BITCH! YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN TOO TOUGH TO DIE, ADACHI! WELCOME BACK!
... AH ... AH ... OOOHHH ... I'M STILL ALIVE ...
MY FACE?
... ONE ... FLEW PAST ME ... REALLY CLOSE ... AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT? ... IT HAD YOUR FACE ... YOUR FACE ... AND THEN I HEARD YOUR CALL ....
... AND AS I FLEW ... I SAW OTHER BLUE TAILED FIREFLIES ... ALL AROUND ME ...
... I ... I WAS A FIREFLY ... A BLUE TAILED FIREFLY ... AND I COULD FLY ... ANYWHERE I WANTED ... ANYWHERE ....
LOTS OF WEIRD THINGS HAPPEN IN DREAMS, YOUNG MAN. I'D IGNORE IT IF I WERE YOU. IT WAS HIS DREAM, NOT YOURS.
HE SAID I WAS A FIREFLY IN HIS DREAM. THAT'S WEIRD.
... I WANT TO GO HOME ... I WANT TO SEE MY MOTHER AND SISTER ONE LAST TIME ... BEFORE ... BEFORE ....
... I MISS FLYING ... WITH THE FIREFLIES ...
... YOU'LL ... MANAGE ... YOU'RE BETTER ... THAN YOU THINK ... OH, I MISS MY HOME! ... I CAN SEE HER NOW ... MY MOTHER ... WORKING THE RICE FIELD ... SHE HAD TO AFTER FATHER DIED ... AND THE WAR ... THERE'S MY SISTER ... HELPING HER ... OOHHH ... I WISH I COULD BE THERE TO HELP ... I WISH I COULD GO HOME ....
NO, NO, NO! DON'T YOU SLIP AWAY LIKE THAT, ADACHI!! HOW CAN I FIGHT WITHOUT YOUR HELP?!


... I COULD GO HOME ... HOME ... OOHHH ... SO TIRED ... NEED ... TO REST ....
... IF I HAD WINGS ... I COULD FLY ... LIKE A FIREFLY ...
IT WILL HAVE ON BOARD A SPECIAL PASSENGER WHO MUST MAKE IT BACK TO JAPAN NO MATTER WHAT.
YES. IT'S HEADING BACK TO JAPAN TONIGHT ON A SPECIAL RUN.
YOU WANT ME TO FLY AIR COVER FOR THE SEN-TOKU?*
... WHO HAS BEEN, SHALL WE SAY, "OVERSEAS," NOW SHE'S COME BACK AND SHE NEEDS TO GET HOME. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
SHE IS A FORMER NOBLE-WOMAN ...
AM I ALLOWED TO KNOW WHO THE PASSENGER IS?

(*) THE I-400 CLASS SUBMARINES, WHICH WERE THE LARGEST FIELDED BY EITHER SIDE DURNG WORLD WAR II. "SEN-TOKU" WAS THEIR OFFICIAL JAPANESE NAME.

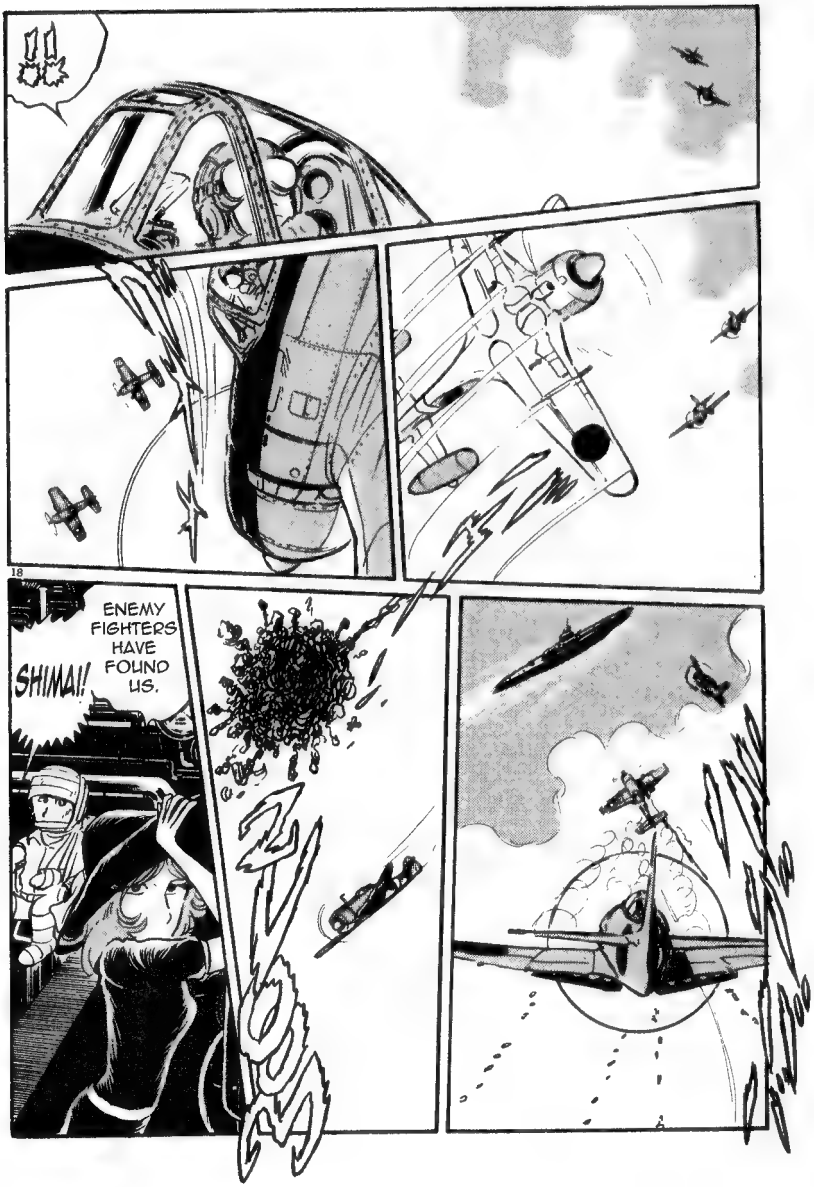

YES, I KNOW, IT'S PART OF THE JOB TO HELP OUT THE OTHER SERVICES AS NEED REQUIRES, BUT I STILL GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS. YOU KNOW?
I GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS. I JOINED THE NAVY TO FIGHT A WAR, NOT PLAY SPY GAMES!
... SOUNDS LIKE A SPY RUN TO ME ... AND YOU SAY ... SHE'S A NOBLEWOMAN? ... NO WONDER ... THEY'RE ... SNEAKING HER HOME ... IN A SUBMARINE.
THERE. I'VE SAID IT. I'VE VENTED. YOU KNOW ME. I'LL DO MY DUTY. I MAY NOT LIKE IT BUT I'LL DO MY DUTY.
I MEAN, LET'S FACE IT. WE'RE LOSING THE WAR. WE'VE GOT BETTER THINGS ON WHICH TO USE THE LAST OF OUR FUEL AND AMMO THAN SPY GAMES!
THEY ARE?!
ANYWAY, I GOT GOOD NEWS FOR YOU. YOU'RE GOING HOME. THEY'RE LETTING YOU HITCH A RIDE IN THAT SEN-TOKU.
IT'S A ROTTEN WAY TO EARN A TRIP HOME, SIR.
ONE OF THE OFFICERS IS EVEN LOANING YOU HIS BUNK.
I TALKED IT OVER WITH THE PASSENGER, AND ONCE SHE KNEW THE FULL STORY THEN SHE AGREED TO LET YOU HITCH A RIDE.
13
SO DROP THE ATTITUDE AND DO YOUR JOB, MISTER, BECAUSE EVERYONE FROM ME ON UP IS COUNTING ON YOU TO MAKE SURE THAT SUB MAKES IT TO JAPAN. THAT WILL BE ALL.
YES IT IS. NOW YOU LISTEN TO ME. WE HAVE ONLY THREE SEN-TOKUS IN WHAT'S LEFT OF OUR NAVY, AND WE'RE DAMN LUCKY THIS ONE'S HERE. IT'S YOUR JOB TO MAKE SURE NOTHING HAPPENS TO IT. DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?

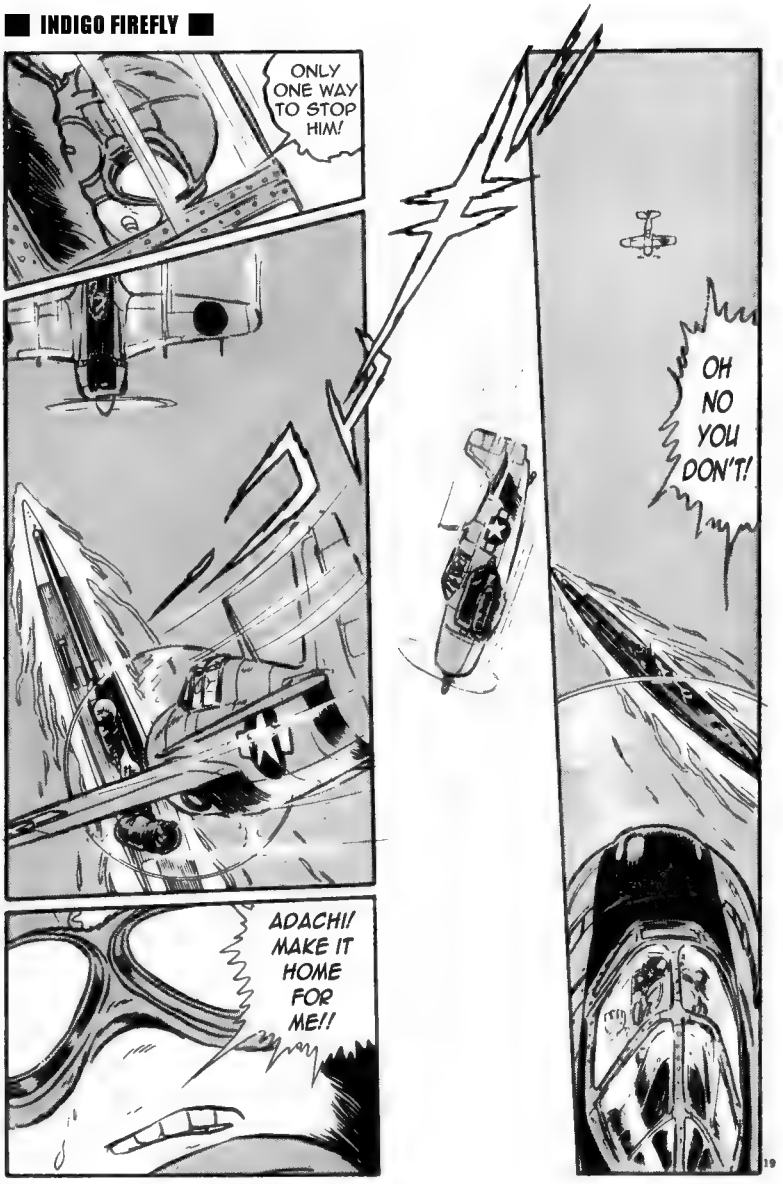

SEE MY MOM, LIKE YOU. I HAVEN'T SEEN HER IN ... GOD, I CAN'T REMEMBER WHEN IT WAS. IT WAS MY LAST LEAVE, I REMEMBER THAT.
SO ... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ... WHEN YOU GET HOME?
AT LEAST I GOT TO VENT. IT'S EASIER TO TAKE HAVING DONE THAT.
BOY ... YOU REALLY ... PISSED HIM OFF ....
SEE YOUR FAMILY?
I MEAN, THAT'S WHAT YOU DO WHEN YOU GO HOME?
I ... WISH ... I COULD FLY ... WITH YOU.
ME, I GET TO FLY UP IN THE OPEN WHERE ANY AMERICAN FIGHTER CAN SPOT ME AND COME AFTER ME.
YOU KNOW, I ENVY YOU AND MISS WHOEVER. YOU GET THE SAFE RIDE DOWN IN THE SUB.
PARDON ME.
USED TO ...? OH. OH! RIGHT. UHH ... I'M FLIGHT SERGEANT SHIMAI TADASHI, AND I'LL BE FLYING AIR COVER FOR YOR.
I'M SORRY IF YOU'RE EMBARRASSED I'VE GOTTEN USED TO THIS.
MA'AM! WHAT ARE YOU--

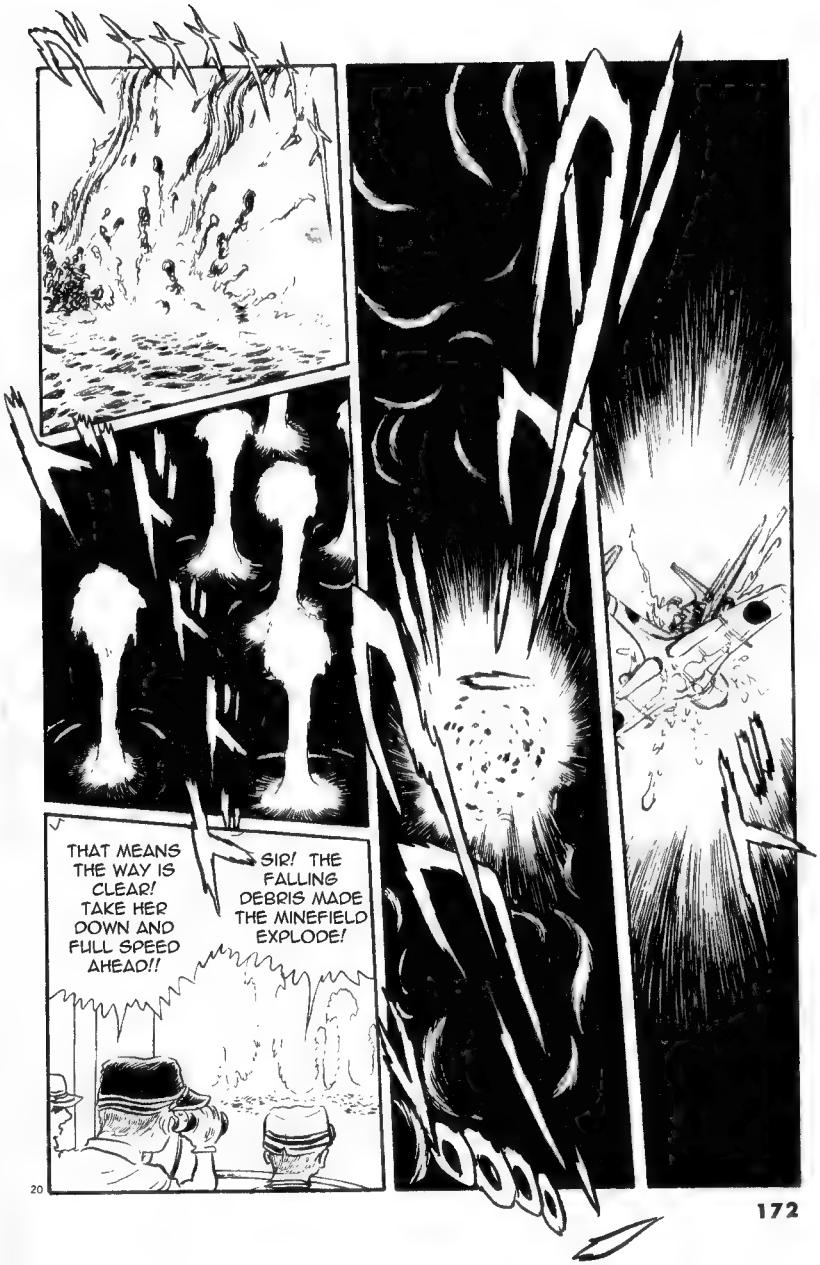

LIKE I SAID, IT'S ALL RIGHT. MIND IF I VISIT?
I-I-I AHH, I DON'T SEE THE DOCTOR ANYWHERE, AND I WAS IN HERE VISITING MY FRIEND THERE AND, UH ...
HA-HAH! SO INNOCENT!
YOU MUST BE HERE FOR THE TRE-PRIP CHISICAL -- I MEAN, PRE-TRIP PHYSICAL. AHH ....
I AM HONORED TO BE YOUR OFFICIAL ESCORT, MA'AM.
YOU'RE WELCOME, AND AREN'T WE ALL?
UHH, THANK YOU FOR LETTING HIM RIDE WITH YOU. HE'S EAGER TO GET HOME TO SEE HIS FAMILY.
I'M AN ONLY CHILD. DAD DIED BEFORE THE WAR, SO MY MOM IS ALL I HAVE LEFT.
AHH, UHH, HE'S GOT A MOTHER AND SISTER WORKING THE FAMILY FARM WHILE HE'S AWAY.
I PROMISE YOU, MA'AM, THAT I WILL DO MY BEST TO MAKE SURE YOU AND MY FRIEND ADACHI MAKE IT ALL THE WAY BACK TO JAPAN.
ME, I'M VERY GRATEFUL TO GET TO GO BACK WITH YOU AND SEE MY OWN FAMILY AGAIN.

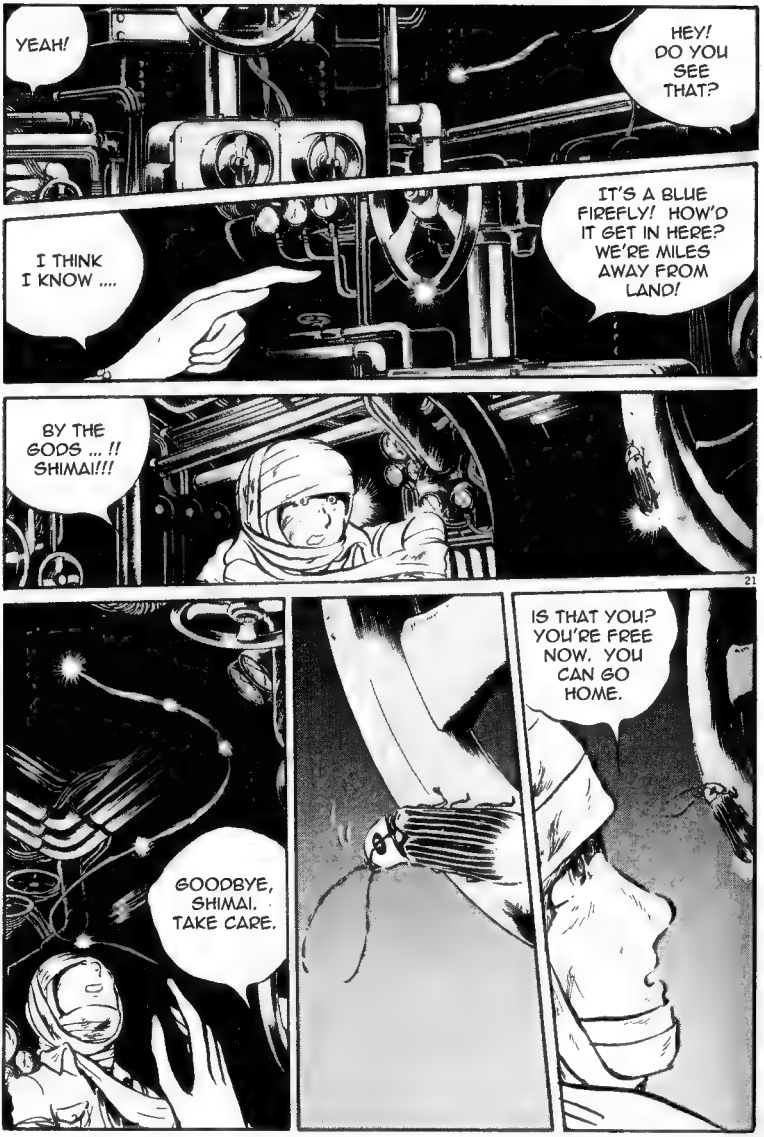
I'M HONORED TOO. THANK YOU.
I ... I HAVE TO GO, BUT IT WAS AN HONOR TO BE WITH YOU, MA'AM.
HAVING SAID THAT, AND NOW THAT I'M AWARE OF THE OTHER FACTORS INVOLVED IN THIS, I HAVE NO FURTHER OBJECTIONS.
BEFORE I GO, I HAVE TO BE HONEST WITH YOU, MA'AM. I WASN'T CRAZY ABOUT BEING ASSIGNED ON THIS MISSION, GIVEN ITS ... UHHH ... "NATURE" AND ALL THAT. YOU KNOW THE WAR SITUATION.
YOU ARE WHAT YOU ARE, AND I AM WHAT I AM. I GUESS WE'RE BOTH COGS IN THAT SENSE, PERFORMING DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS FOR A WAR MACHINE FAST RUNNING DOWN.
I WOULD HAVE HAD TO DO IT ANYWAY, YOU KNOW. I'M A GOOD LITTLE PILOT, A COG IN THE IMPERIAL WAR MACHINE -- OR WHAT'S LEFT OF IT, ANYWAY.
NO MA'AM. I'M JUST BEING HONEST. I WANTED YOU TO KNOW FROM WHERE I'M COMING, IF I DON'T GET THE CHANCE TO TELL YOU LATER.
ARE YOU BEING SARCASTIC, TADASHI?
16
THANK YOU, FLIGHT SERGEANT TADASHI.
outh University
ector Kim Kwan
... FOR ADACHI, AND I IN TURN WILL DO MY BEST TO SEE BOTH OF YOU GET HOME.
ANYWAY, AND AS I SAID BEFORE, THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART FOR WHAT YOU'RE DOING ...

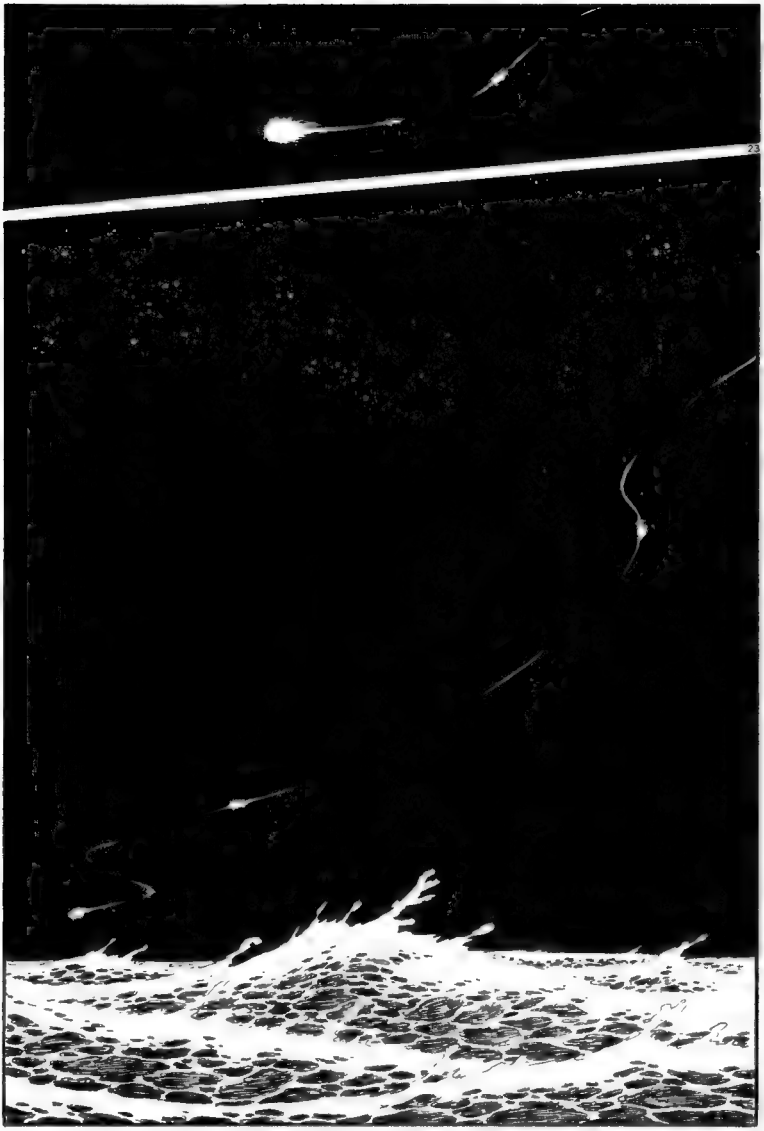
SKY'S CLEAR SAVE FOR OUR ESCORT!
ENEMY AIRCRAFT! FOUR O' CLOCK HIGH AND CLOSING!
ALL HANDS TO BATTLE STATIONS!
AA GUNNERS, MAN YOUR GUNS!!
WHY ARE WE RUNNING ON THE SURFACE?
WE'RE HAVING TO THREAD OUR WAY THROUGH ONE OF OUR OWN MINEFIELDS, MA'AM.


OH
NO
18
SHIMA!!
ENEMY FIGHTERS HAVE FOUND US.


ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP HIM!
OH NO YOU DON'T!
ADACHI! MAKE IT HOME FOR ME!!


SIR! THE FALLING DEBRIS MADE THE MINEFIELD EXPLODE!
THAT MEANS THE WAY IS CLEAR! TAKE HER DOWN AND FULL SPEED AHEAD!!
20


YEAH!
HEY! DO YOU SEE THAT?
I THINK I KNOW ....
IT'S A BLUE FIREFLY! HOW'D IT GET IN HERE? WE'RE MILES AWAY FROM LAND!
BY THE GODS ... !! SHIMA!!!
21
GOODBYE, SHIMA!. TAKE CARE.
IS THAT YOU? YOU'RE FREE NOW. YOU CAN GO HOME.



AUGUST 15, 1945 WAS THE DAY THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC OFFICIALLY ENDED. IT WAS ALSO A DAY NOTED FOR ITS HEAVY FIREFLY SWARMS.

AROUND THAT SAME TIME A LONE INDIGO FIREFLY CAME TO A LONELY OLD WOMAN ON A REMOTE FARM.
THE OLD WOMAN STARTED, AND THEN SMILED. "SHIMAI, IS THAT YOU?" SHE SAID. WHEN THE FIREFLY BLINKED, SHE GOT OUT A BOWL OF RICE. "YOU MUST BE HUNGRY," SHE SAID.
THE FIREFLY ATE ITS FILL AND THEN STAYED BY THE OLD WOMAN FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT. THE LAST THING SHE SAID BEFORE GOING TO SLEEP WAS, "GOOD NIGHT, MY SON."
IN THE MORNING THE FIREFLY WAS DEAD, FOR THEIR LIVES ARE SHORT AND IT HAD FLOWN A VERY LONG WAY TO COME TO THE OLD WOMAN BEFORE IT PASSED.
THE OLD WOMAN TOOK THAT DEAD FIREFLY AND CAREFULLY HELD IT TO HER BOSOM, SINGING SOFTLY TO IT, EVEN THOUGH IT COULD HEAR HER SONG NO MORE.

SHE LATER TOLD ME THAT IN THE MORNING THE FIREFLY'S BODY HAD DISAPPEARED, AS IF IT WAS NEVER THERE TO BEGIN WITH. SHE KNEW BETTER, OF COURSE.
THAT IS WHY WHENEVER I SEE AN INDIGO FIREFLY I PAY IT GREAT RESPECT. I THINK OF SHIMAI TADASHI, AND OF ALL THE OTHER SOULS WHO THE INDIGO FIREFLIES HELP TO FLY.
ENDE

HARD METAL

SHIDEN BLUE BLOOD

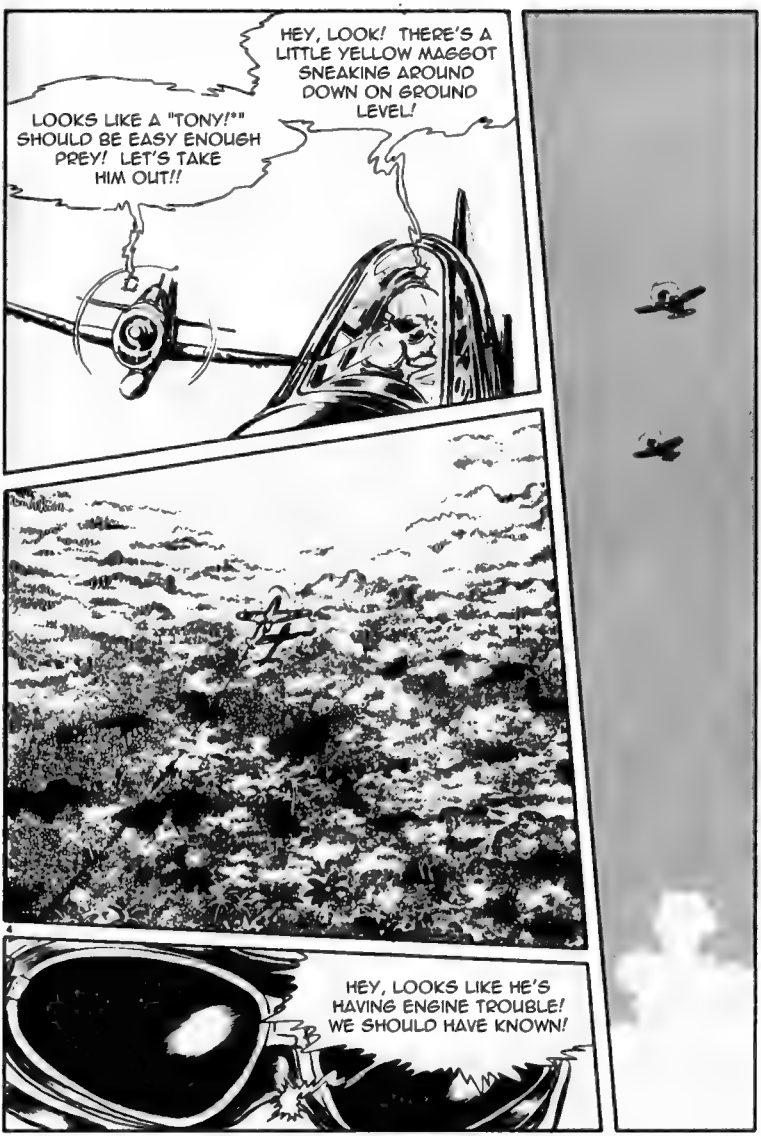
HEY MAX! MY RADIO ISN'T WORKING PROPERLY!

CAN YOU CALL THAT BATTLESHIP DOWN THERE AND ASK THEM TO STOP FIRING?

I'LL TRY, HARRY, BUT I DON'T THINK THEY'LL DO IT.

THEY'VE GOT THEIR PRIORITIES TOO, YOU KNOW.

109

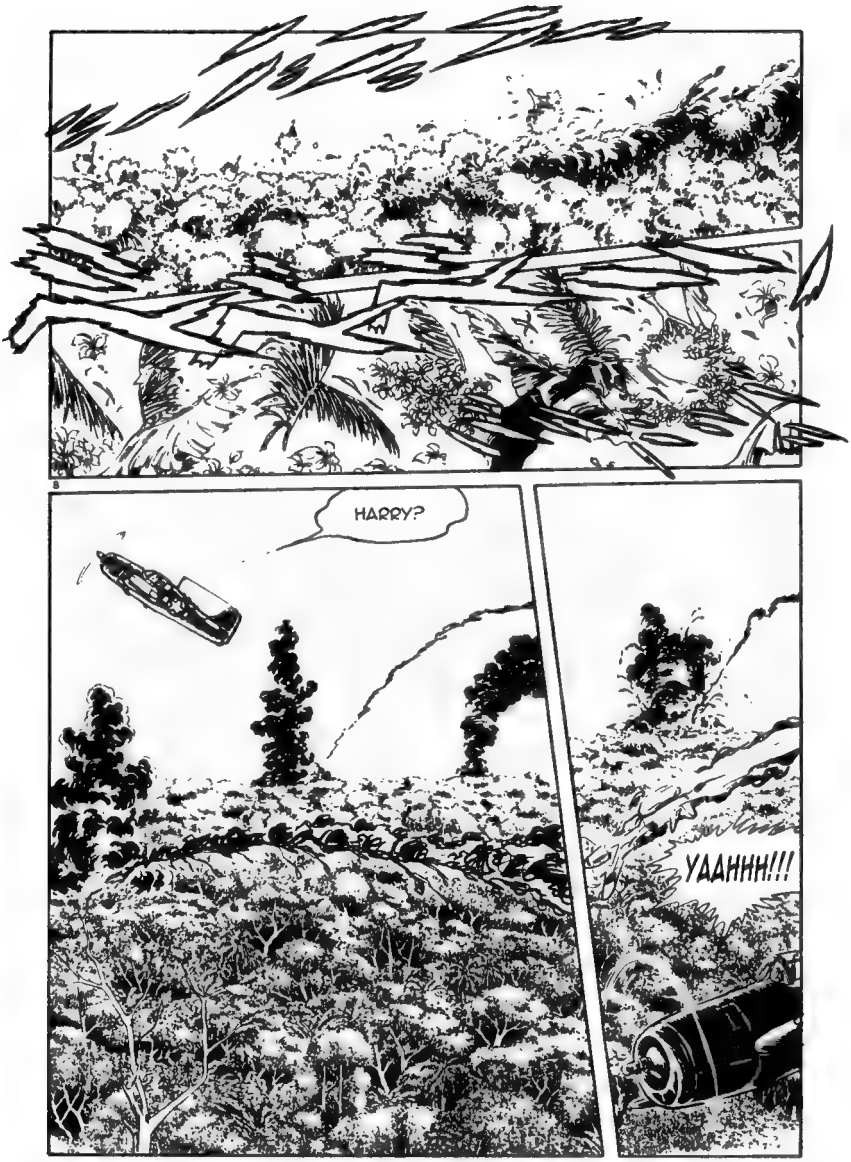

HEY, LOOK! THERE'S A LITTLE YELLOW MAGGOT SNEAKING AROUND DOWN ON GROUND LEVEL!
LOOKS LIKE A "TONY!"* SHOULD BE EASY ENOUGH PREY! LET'S TAKE HIM OUT!!
HEY, LOOKS LIKE HE'S HAVING ENGINE TROUBLE! WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN!

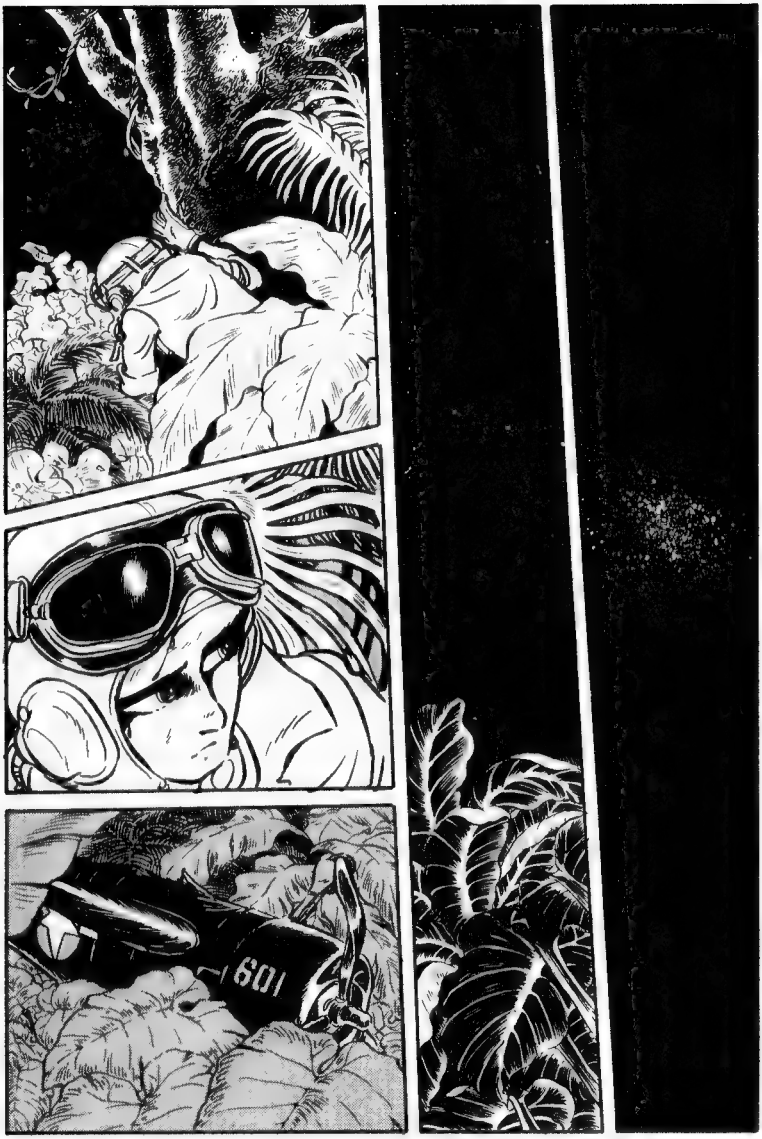
(*) "TONY" – ALLIED CODE NAME FOR THE KAWASAKI KI-61 HIEN. ALSO KNOWN AS THE "JAPANESE MUSTANG" GIVEN ITS OVERALL LIKENESS, THE "TONY" WAS ALSO ONE OF MATSUMOTO'S FAVORITE JAPANESE FIGHTERS. IT APPEARS A LOT IN HIS *BATTLEFIELD* STORIES.

THEY NEED TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE SHIT RIGHT INSTEAD OF COYPING OTHERS!
YOU KNOW WHY, DON'T YOU? THE "TONY" USES AN INFERIOR JAPANESE COPY OF A GERMAN ENGINE. IT'S ONE OF THE REASONS THE "TONY" ISN'T VERY GOOD.
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE THEIR BLOOD IS THE SAME COLOR AS OURS UNDER THAT YELLOW SKIN!

SHIT! THERE WERE TWO OF THEM!!
HARRY! BEHIND YOU!

BYE BYE, YOU POOR JAP! WHEN ARE YOU JERKS EVER GOING TO LEARN YOU CAN'T TAKE ON A HELLCAT WITH SUCH A WEAK ENGINE?!


HARRY?
YAAHHH!!!


601

SO! YOU'RE STILL ALIVE!
OMAE NO KUTABARE, YAN-KEE*
STILL, IF IT COMES DOWN TO HAND-TO HAND, I'LL GIVE IT MY BEST. I'LL MAKE IT A FIGHT WORTH REMEMBERING!
DAMN, BUT WHY DO AMERICAN MEN HAVE TO BE SO BIG?!

(*) "YEAH, AND FUCK YOU TOO, YANKEE."

KARATE TO JUDO GA DEKIRU NDA! ORE WA BUDO NO TATSUJINDA ZO! KIWOTSUKERO! (I AM A MARTIAL ARTS MASTER! I KNOW KARATE AND JUDO! BEWARE!)
YOU WANT TO FIGHT?
CRAP! HE'S NOT BUYING IT! AND HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S PRETTY GOOD WITH HIS FISTS!
JUST LIKE THE WAR. YOU SHOULD HAVE WAITED A FEW DECADES TO TAKE US ON.
WHAT A BLUFF, JUST LIKE THAT ENGINE OF YOURS! YOU NEED ABOUT TEN MORE YEARS OF WORK TO MAKE IT WORK RIGHT!
このエンジンではダメだ。このようなものではアメリカには絶対勝てないよ。10年の大差がある!!
挑戦するのが半世紀ほど早かったぜ。
GORATA ISHIYAMA CHUI, TEITOKU RIKUGUN KOKU-TAI.**
BY THE WAY, I'M LIEUTENANT* HARRY TOOTHMAN, UNITED STATES NAVY.
俺はハリー・トースマン大尉。
YOU KNOW, LIEUTENANT GORATA, YOU YELLOWBELLIES SHOULDN'T TRY TO COMPETE WITH US WHITES IN THE SKY. YOU JUST DON'T HAVE WHAT IT TAKES.
だいたい、黄色い奴らが白人をさしおいて空を飛ぼうなどというのが、おこがましい。

(*) RANK CORRECTED FROM ORIGINAL TEXT.
(**) "LIEUTENANT ISHIYAMA GORATA, IMPERIAL ARMY AIR CORPS."

YOU JAPS ARE GOING TO LOSE THIS WAR. UNDERSTAND?
この戦争はてめえたちの負けよ、わかるか？
REAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY CAME FROM THE WHITES. THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT IS.
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU ASIANS.
科学文明は白人が築いたものだ。
おまえらアジアのチビには関係ねえ。
YOUR SIMPLE MINDS JUST CAN'T HANDLE SUCH COMPLICATED CONCEPTS. NOT THAT YOU JAPS THINK LOGICALLY ANYWAY.
I COULD TALK ABOUT CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION ALL DAY LONG AND YOU WOULDN'T BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND.
12
どうせ日本人の頭は物事を理論的に考えるようには出来てねえんだ。
文化や文明について話してみたっていい。おまえらにゃ理解出来ない。
日本語なんていう原始的な言語体系を操っていて何が空中を飛ぶというのだ。
AND THAT BABBLING YOU CALL LANGUAGE! IT'S LIKE YOUR COPIED ENGINES! I STILL WONDER HOW YOU MONKEYS LEARNED HOW TO FLY!

WELL, MR. YANKEE, ONLY A FOOL CALLS BARBARIC A LANGUAGE HE CAN'T UNDERSTAND, MUCH LESS THE PERSON WHO SPEAKS IT.
WHAT ... ?
おまえらが理解出来ない
言葉は全て原始的だと
いうのかい、ヤンキーさんは。
何!?
ITA! (THERE HE IS!)
NIHON WA KONO 200-NENKAN, UMAKU YATTEKIMASHITA YO! ANATA NO KUNI WA DODESU KA, TOOTHMAN-SAN? HA-HA-HAH!*

(*) "JAPAN HAS BEEN DOING JUST FINE FOR 200 YEARS. CAN YOU SAY THE SAME FOR YOUR COUNTRY, MISTER TOOTHMAN?"

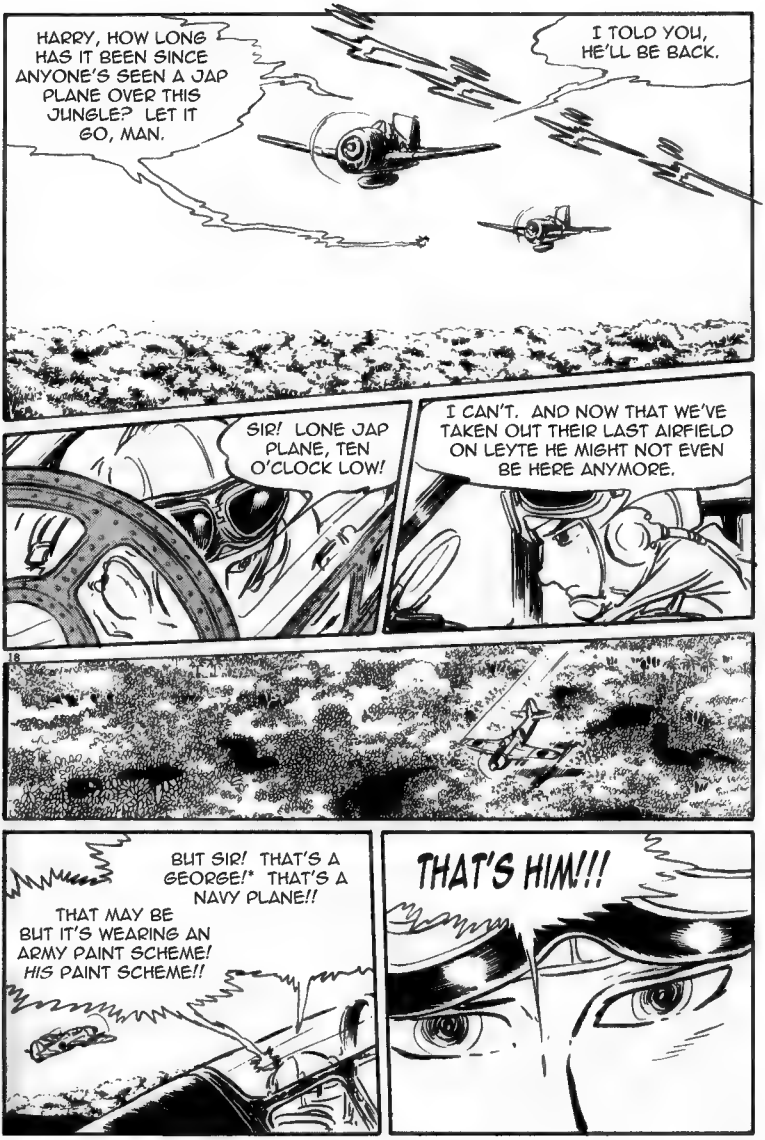
HEY!
14
AND ALL THE OTHER PLANES WERE EITHER SHOT DOWN OR CRASHED.
YOU FLEW A HIEN, YOU SAY? GREAT PLANE BUT THE ENGINE AND GUNS STINK.

THIS IS A FORMER NAVY AIRFIELD.
HRMPH. I SEE NOTHING BUT NAVY PLANES HERE.
WELL, THE ONE THAT'S IN THE BEST SHAPE IS AN EARLY MODEL SHIDEN*. NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT, I THINK WE CAN SCROUNGE UP ENOUGH PART TO DO IT. MIGHT MAKE A NICE PROJECT FOR THE MEN.
PLEASE, SIR.
WHAT? YOU WANT MY MECHANICS TO PUT TOGETHER A PLANE THAT CAN FLY FROM ALL OF THESE OLD NAVY WRECKS?
OH I WON'T! BELIEVE ME I WON'T! I'LL BE GRATEFUL JUST TO FLY AGAIN, AND MAYBE FIND THAT SMART-MOUTHED YANKEE ONCE AGAIN AND PUT HIM DOWN FOR GOOD! I'D BE EVER SO GRATEFUL!
BUT DON'T BLAME US IF IT FALLS APART ON YOU IN FLIGHT!
WE'VE GOT 2000 YEARS OF CIVILIZATION BEHIND US AND YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT WHAT A LOUDMOUTH FROM A COUNTRY THAT'S ONLY 200 YEARS OLD SAYS? I GUESS I UNDERSTAND ....
YOU KNOW HOW IT IS, SIR. HOW THE AMERICANS TALK ABOUT AND INSULT US EVERY CHANCE THEY GET? I CAN'T LET GO THE THINGS HE SAID TO ME.
15
I'LL SEE WHAT'S IN THE JUNK PILE.
ONE MORE THING. COULD YOU FIND ME A HEFTIER ENGINE? HELLCAT ENGINES ARE REALLY GOOD.

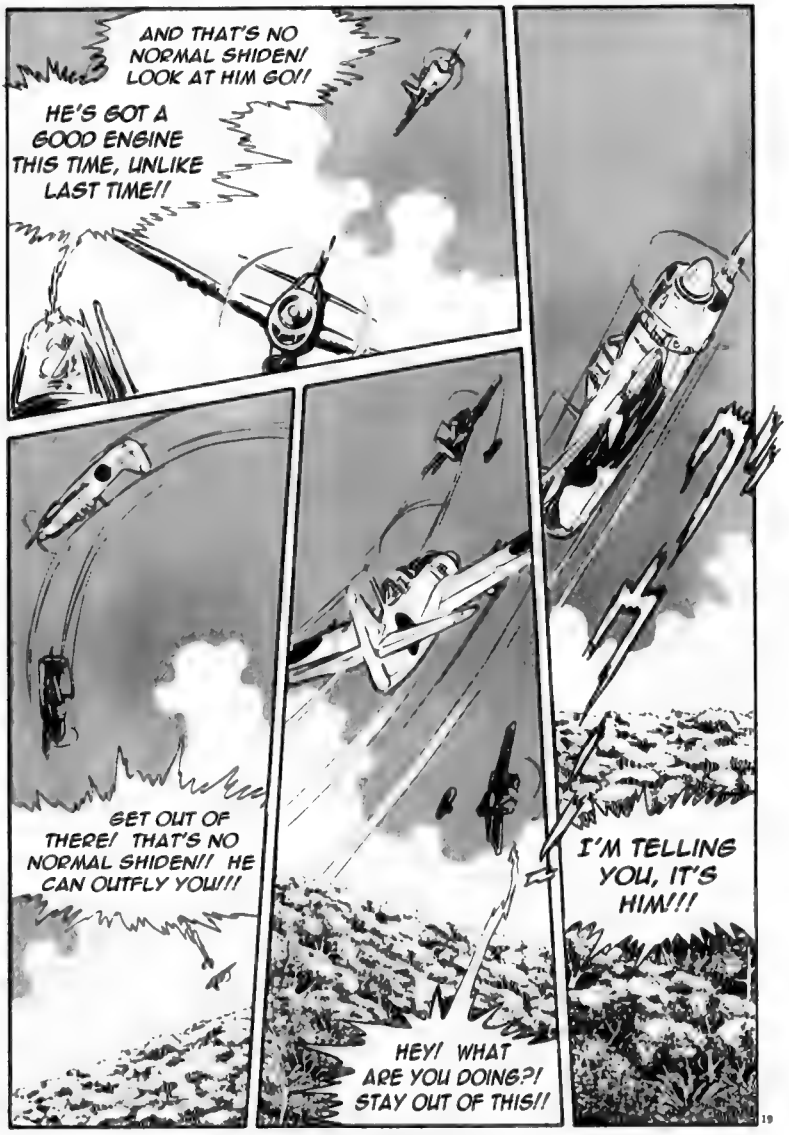
(*) THIS WOULD BE THE KAWASAKI N1K-J SHIDEN, THE EARLY LAND-BASED VERSION.

ME, A YELLOW MONKEY! WHAT DOES THAT MAKE HIM, A HAIRY WHITE APE?!
THAT YANKEE BASTARD IS GOING TO EAT ALL OF THE THINGS HE SAID.
AREN'T WE?
NO, WE DON'T LOOK ALIKE, BUT WE'RE STILL BOTH HUMAN.
... I WANT IT PAINTED THE SAME WAY MY OLD HEIN WAS PAINTED, NOT IN NAVY COLORS.
ONE MORE FAVOR, IF I MAY. ONCE IT'S READY, AND IF YOUR MEN CAN ...
I WANT HIM TO KNOW IT'S ME THE NEXT TIME I'M UP THERE WITH HIM.
BECAUSE HE'S A GOOD PILOT, EVEN IF HE IS A YANKEE ASS. THAT'S HOW I KNOW.
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO. HOW ARE YOU SO SURE HE'LL BE BACK UP THERE?
16
I MUST FACE HIM AGAIN ... I *WILL* FACE HIM AGAIN ... ONLY THIS TIME, I WON'T LOSE. I *CAN'T* LOSE. I CAN'T.

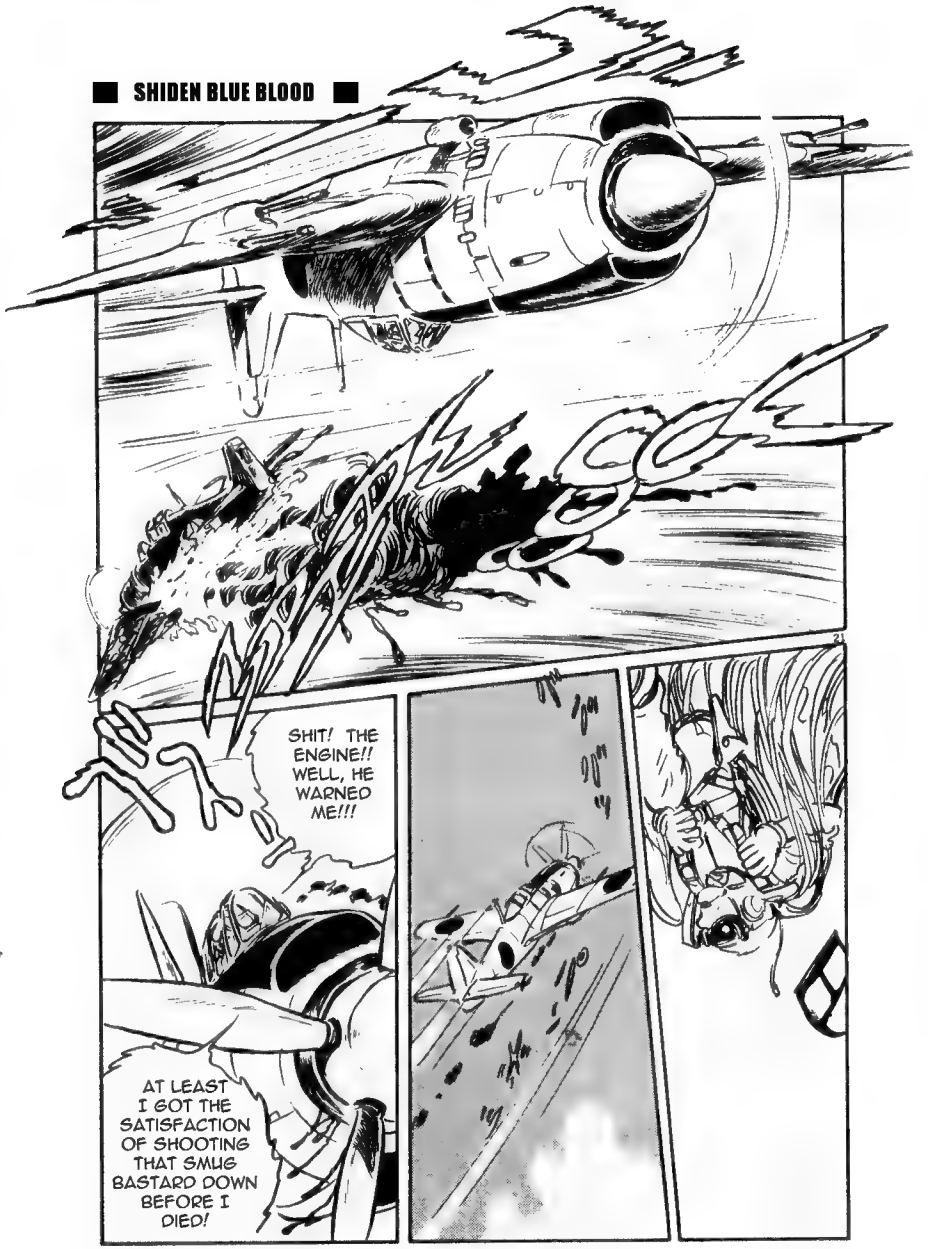
FINE. WHATEVER.
WE'LL HAVE TO ADJUST YOUR NEW ENGINE TO RUN ON ARMY AVIATION FUEL, GIVEN THAT IT'S GOING TO COME FROM A JUNKED NAVY PLANE.
YOU DO KNOW THAT THE NAVY'S AVIATION FUEL MIX ISN'T THE SAME AS THE ARMY USES.
THAT'S CRAZY.
I'LL BE HONEST, SIR. I DON'T CARE IF YOU HAVE TO FIX THAT PLANE UP WITH A GIANT RUBBER BAND ON TWO HOOKS TO MAKE IT GO, SO LONG AS I CAN FIGHT HIM AGAIN.
JAPANESE HISTORY GOES BACK EVEN FARTHER THAN THAT. WE ARE A PROUD, CULTURED, CIVILIZED PEOPLE.
IS IT? YOU SAID WE HAVE 1800 YEARS ON THE AMERICANS.
... WITH THEIR MOUTH, AND THEIR ATTITUDE, AND THEIR OVERWEENING ARROGANCE, AND WE SHOULD TAKE IT?
AND THEN HERE COME THE AMERICANS ...
THEY'RE A NATION OF TWO-YEAR-OLDS, SAYING WHATEVER THEY WANT JUST BECAUSE THEY CAN!
I'M SORRY, SIR. I CAN'T. I'M PROUD OF WHO I AM. I'M PROUD TO BE JAPANESE. YOU KNOW?
17
YEAH, I KNOW. I WONDER HOW THEY'LL BE AFTER THEY WIN.
I ... I'M SORRY. IT JUST GETS TO YOU AFTER A WHILE, YOU KNOW?

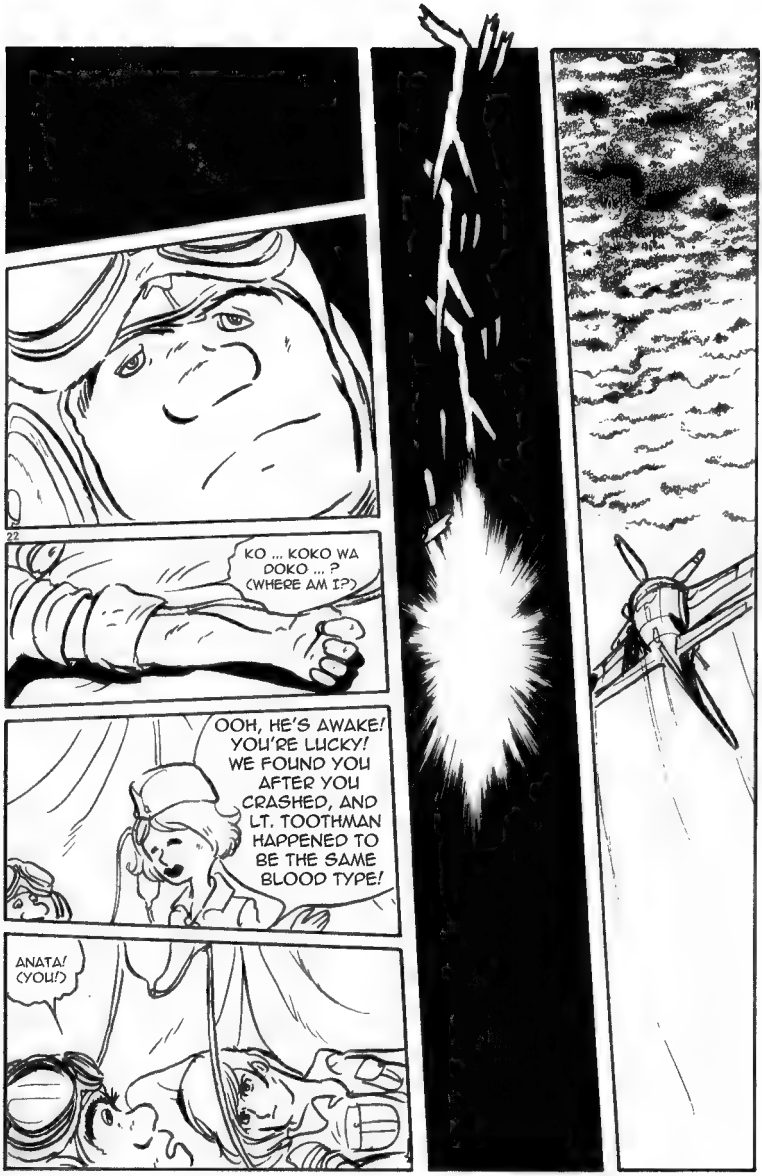

HARRY, HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE ANYONE'S SEEN A JAP PLANE OVER THIS JUNGLE? LET IT GO, MAN.
I TOLD YOU, HE'LL BE BACK.
SIR! LONE JAP PLANE, TEN O'CLOCK LOW!
I CAN'T. AND NOW THAT WE'VE TAKEN OUT THEIR LAST AIRFIELD ON LEYTE HE MIGHT NOT EVEN BE HERE ANYMORE.
18
BUT SIR! THAT'S A GEORGE!* THAT'S A NAVY PLANE!!
THAT MAY BE BUT IT'S WEARING AN ARMY PAINT SCHEME! HIS PAINT SCHEME!!
THAT'S HIM!!!

(*) "GEORGE" - THE ALLIED CODE NAME FOR THE KAWASAKI NIK-J SHIDEN.


AND THAT'S NO NORMAL SHIDEN! LOOK AT HIM GO!!
HE'S GOT A GOOD ENGINE THIS TIME, UNLIKE LAST TIME!!
GET OUT OF THERE! THAT'S NO NORMAL SHIDEN!! HE CAN OUTFLY YOU!!!
HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! STAY OUT OF THIS!!
I'M TELLING YOU, IT'S HIM!!!

SO WE CAN'T FLY, EH?! EAT THIS, YOU YANKEE SCUMBAGS!!
20


SHIT! THE ENGINE!! WELL, HE WARNED ME!!!
AT LEAST I GOT THE SATISFACTION OF SHOOTING THAT SMUG BASTARD DOWN BEFORE I DIED!


22
KO ... KOKO WA DOKO ... ? (WHERE AM I?)
OOH, HE'S AWAKE! YOU'RE LUCKY! WE FOUND YOU AFTER YOU CRASHED, AND LT. TOOTHMAN HAPPENED TO BE THE SAME BLOOD TYPE!
ANATA! (YOU!)

23
HI THERE ... BLOOD BROTHER.
... BRUD ... BRUDDA ...? AH, SO! AAAHH ... DOMO ... AAHHH ... THANKA YU.
ME ... SAMURAI FAMIREE ... HOW YU SAY ... "BRUE BRUD?" HA-HAH. NOW YU BRUE BRUD TOO.
BRUD NIX ... YU RED ... ME BRU ... NOW ... KORE WA ... BAIORETTO?* AHH ... IS NO SO BAD ... IS IT?
(*) HOW "VIOLET" WOULD SOUND IN JAPANESE
NO, IT'S NOT SO BAD. TELL YOU WHAT. LET'S LET BYGONES BE BYGONES, OKAY? IT'S AN AMERICAN TRADITION. AS YOUNG AS US, YES BUT STILL A TRADITION.
OKAY! THAT'S A PRETTY GOOD TRADITION TO COME UP WITH IN ONLY A HUNDRED YEARS OR SO. I'M IMPRESSED.
仲直りしよう。男同士じゃないか。手強い奴に敬意を払うのはアメリカの良い伝統だ。
ＯＫ!! 100年の歴史にしてはおまえらもようやっちょる。感心したぜ。
I GIVE YOU CREDIT FOR TRYING. YOU'RE A BRAVE MAN. BUT YOU WERE A RABBIT GOING UP AGAINST AN EAGLE.
わかるか？だが、この戦争はおまえらの負けで、ウサギはワシには勝てない。
SO YOU SAY ... BUT THE WAR GOES ON WITHOUT US, FRIEND ... AND SO DOES HISTORY.

HE WAS RIGHT, YOU KNOW. THE PLAYERS MAY CHANGE, BUT HISTORY STILL MARCHES ON ...
... HAVING LEFT THE WAR BEHIND.
ENDE

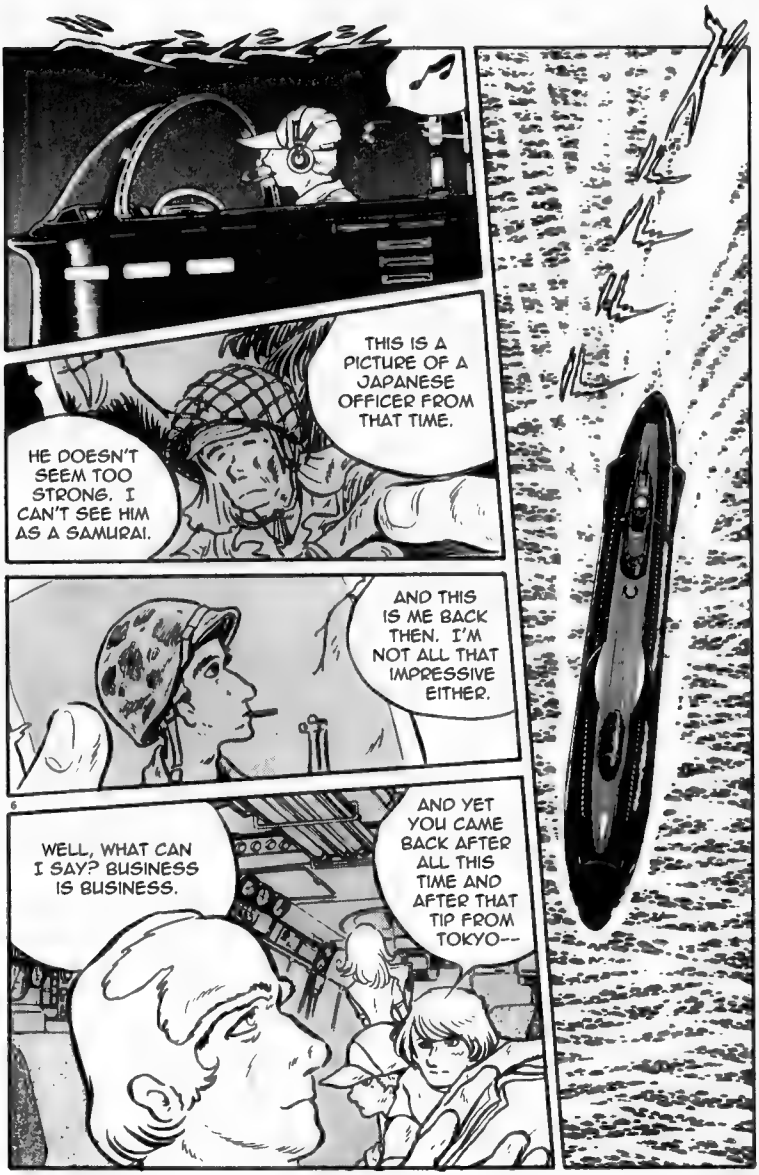
HARD METAL

THIS STORY BEGINS LATE IN THE WAR WITH SIX MEN HAVING DUG A DEEP HOLE ON A BATTLEFIELD.
EVERY-ONE GOT THEIR LOOK? ALL RIGHT. FILL IT BACK UP.
ALL RIGHT, GUYS. TAKE A GOOD LOOK, BECAUSE THIS IS THE LAST TIME YOU'LL SEE IT.
SO SAD.

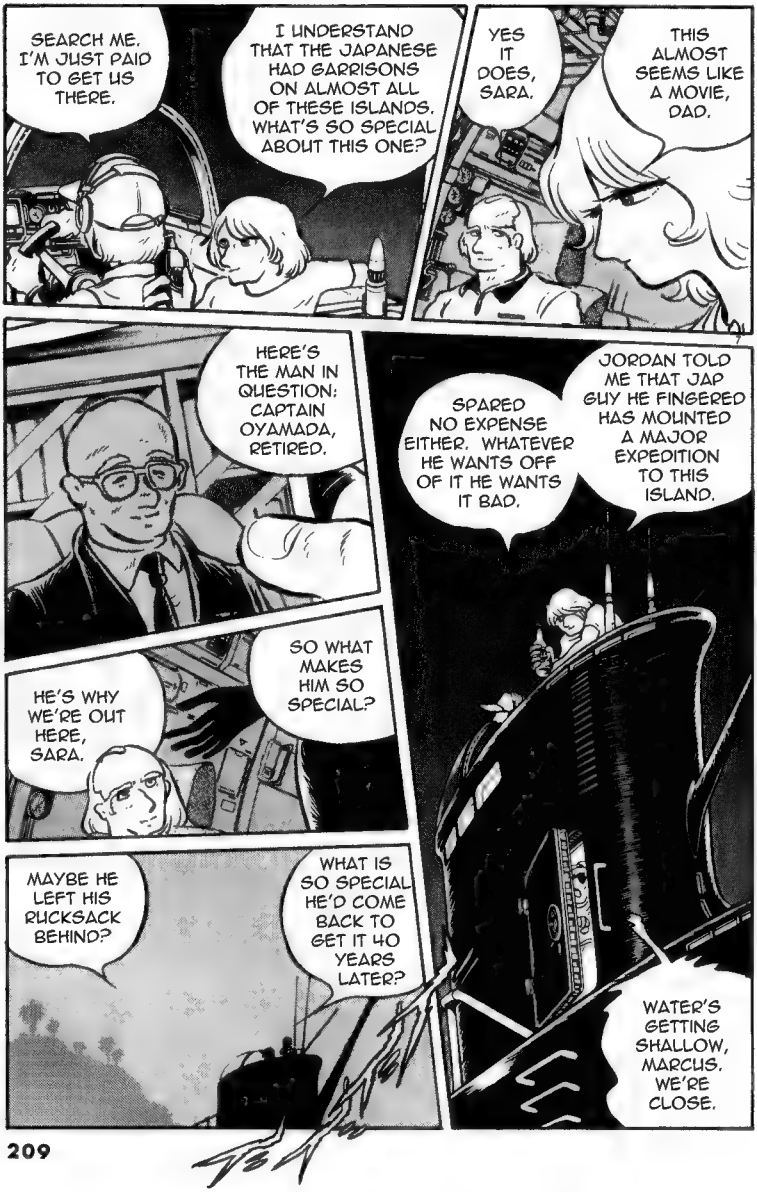
KOOOOOOOM

WHO BUT US WOULD WANT TO?
THOSE SHELL STRIKES DID IT! NO ONE CAN FIND IT NOW!

WHERE THE
BATTLE FLAG
RESTS


THIS IS A PICTURE OF A JAPANESE OFFICER FROM THAT TIME.
HE DOESN'T SEEM TOO STRONG. I CAN'T SEE HIM AS A SAMURAI.
AND THIS IS ME BACK THEN. I'M NOT ALL THAT IMPRESSIVE EITHER.
AND YET YOU CAME BACK AFTER ALL THIS TIME AND AFTER THAT TIP FROM TOKYO--
WELL, WHAT CAN I SAY? BUSINESS IS BUSINESS.

NOTE - FYI THE SUB WHICH MAJOR JORDAN AND HIS TEAM IS USING APPEARS TO BE A MODIFIED WAR SURPLUS "GUPPY II" REFIT OF A WARTIME SUB, COMPLETE WITH CHARACTERISTIC REPLACEMENT CONNING TOWER.


SEARCH ME. I'M JUST PAID TO GET US THERE.
I UNDERSTAND THAT THE JAPANESE HAD GARRISONS ON ALMOST ALL OF THESE ISLANDS. WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THIS ONE?
YES IT DOES, SARA.
THIS ALMOST SEEMS LIKE A MOVIE, DAD.
HERE'S THE MAN IN QUESTION: CAPTAIN OYAMADA, RETIRED.
SPARED NO EXPENSE EITHER. WHATEVER HE WANTS OFF OF IT HE WANTS IT BAD.
JORDAN TOLD ME THAT JAP GUY HE FINGERED HAS MOUNTED A MAJOR EXPEDITION TO THIS ISLAND.
SO WHAT MAKES HIM SO SPECIAL?
HE'S WHY WE'RE OUT HERE, SARA.
MAYBE HE LEFT HIS RUCKSACK BEHIND?
WHAT IS SO SPECIAL HE'D COME BACK TO GET IT 40 YEARS LATER?
WATER'S GETTING SHALLOW, MARCUS. WE'RE CLOSE.

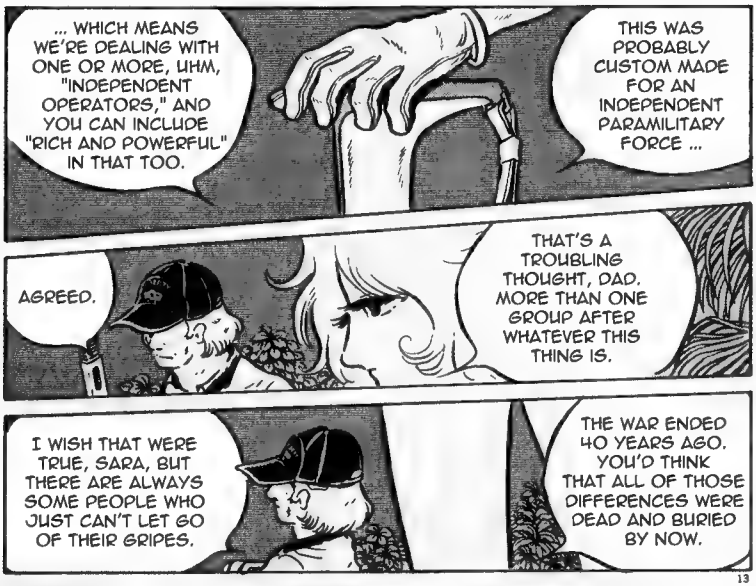
HE'S EXPECTING TROUBLE. ISN'T THAT RIGHT, DAD?
AND WHY ALL THE GUNS AND LIVE AMMO?
I WOULDN'T DO ANYTHING LIKE THIS WITHOUT PROPER PROTECTION.
I WOULD.
YEP.
SO, YOU THINK WE'RE UP AGAINST A FEW OR A LOT?
YOU LET ME WORRY ABOUT THAT, ALL RIGHT?
SHUT THE HELL UP.
THAT FUCKING HELPS! A FEW OR A LOT? WHICH IS IT? A FEW OR A LOT! DO WE LUG ONLY A LITTLE AMMO OR AS MUCH AS WE CAN CARRY? A FEW OR A LOT?!

EVERYONE LAY LOW! WE'VE GOT MOVEMENT AHEAD! LOCK AND LOAD!
SARA! DON'T MOVE!
9
KYOM

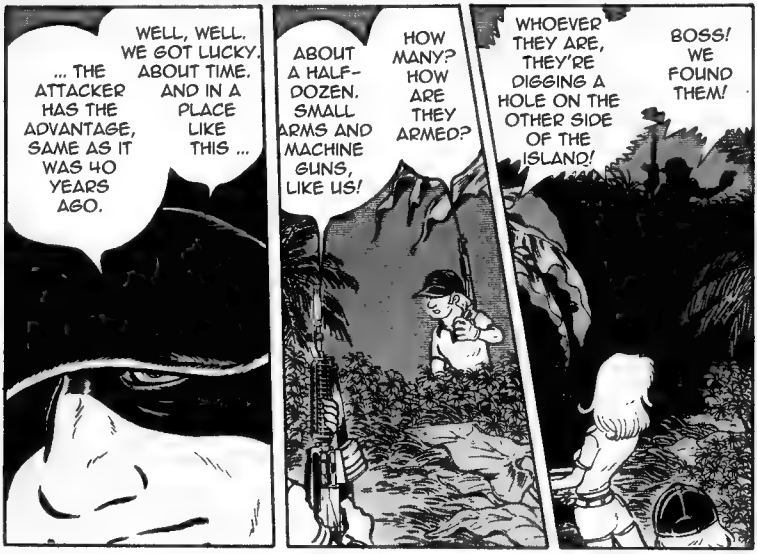
SOMEBODY'S EITHER ON TO US OR AFTER THE SAME THING, WHATEVER IT IS.
THEN THIS ISLAND HASN'T BEEN ABANDONED SINCE THE WAR, AS WE WERE TOLD.
LOCAL GARRISON FORCE. LOOKS JAPANESE.
THIS IS WHAT I WAS SAYING! WE SHOULD HAVE COME LOADED FOR BEAR!
EITHER WAY, WHOEVER'S ALREADY HERE HAS BEEN WARNED BY THE GUNFIRE.
10
TURNER! TO THE LEFT! MARCUS! TO THE RIGHT! I'LL LAY DOWN COVERING FIRE HERE! ON MY SIGNAL!
OKAY, BOSS!
WHAT IS IT?
WHAT DID YOU LEAVE HERE 40 YEARS AGO THAT'S WORTH DYING FOR, OYAMADA?
BOOOM

NOW!!!
READY!
IS EVERYONE SET?!
READY!
TETETE
GOOD JOB!
GOT 'EM!
WHAT ARE THEY? ARE THEY MORE JAPANESE?
DUNNO. THEY LOOK ASIAN BUT CAN'T TELL WHICH TYPE.

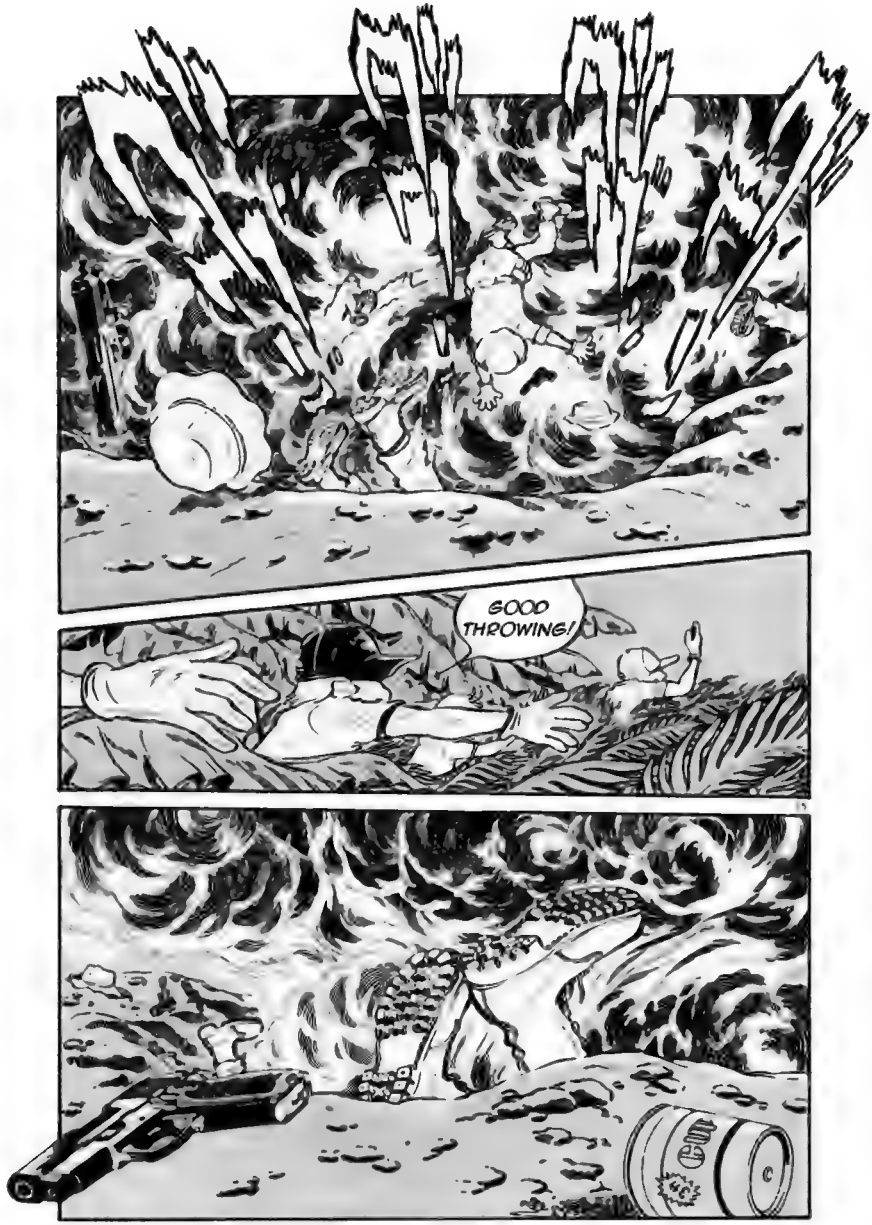
THIS HEAVY MACHINE GUN ... IT LOOKS GERMAN BUT WAS MADE IN JAPAN.
LOOKS LIKE A CUSTOMIZED MG-34 TO ME, BOSS.
I DON'T REMEMBER THEM EVER FIELDING AN MG-34 OR ANY VARIANT THEREOF. NOW THEY HAD THEIR OWN TYPE 3 HEAVY MACHINE GUN ...
... BUT IT ONLY KINDA LOOKED LIKE IT AND THE BARREL WAS DIFFERENT.
MAYBE IT'S SOMETHING UNDER THE RADAR. WE'RE NOT EXACTLY DEALING WITH OFFICIAL JAPANESE MILITARY FORCES HERE.
12


... WHICH MEANS WE'RE DEALING WITH ONE OR MORE, UHM, "INDEPENDENT OPERATORS," AND YOU CAN INCLUDE "RICH AND POWERFUL" IN THAT TOO.
THIS WAS PROBABLY CUSTOM MADE FOR AN INDEPENDENT PARAMILITARY FORCE ...
AGREED.
THAT'S A TROUBLING THOUGHT, DAD. MORE THAN ONE GROUP AFTER WHATEVER THIS THING IS.
I WISH THAT WERE TRUE, SARA, BUT THERE ARE ALWAYS SOME PEOPLE WHO JUST CAN'T LET GO OF THEIR GRIPES.
THE WAR ENDED 40 YEARS AGO. YOU'D THINK THAT ALL OF THOSE DIFFERENCES WERE DEAD AND BURIED BY NOW.

13


... THE ATTACKER HAS THE ADVANTAGE, SAME AS IT WAS 40 YEARS AGO.
WELL, WELL. WE GOT LUCKY. ABOUT TIME. AND IN A PLACE LIKE THIS ...
ABOUT A HALF-DOZEN. SMALL ARMS AND MACHINE GUNS, LIKE US!
HOW MANY? HOW ARE THEY ARMED?
WHOEVER THEY ARE, THEY'RE DIGGING A HOLE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND!
BOSS! WE FOUND THEM!

THEY WIPED THEM OUT! WE'RE ALL THAT'S LEFT, PRESIDENT SIR!
YOU PROMISED YOU COULD HANDLE THEM! NOW WE'RE--
14


GOOD THROWING!

I KNOW IT'S YOU, CAPTAIN OYAMADA. YOU'VE BEEN BEEN LEADING QUITE THE MERRY CHASE BUT THE GAME'S OVER. GIVE UP NOW WHILE YOU STILL CAN.
. FUCK ..
16
... NOT ... WHILE I ...
DO YOU HEAR ME? YOU HAVE NO CHANCE OF WINNING. SURRENDER NOW WHILE YOU CAN.
DAD, LOOK OUT!!!

SARA! OH GOD, NO!!
AAHHH! RUM!!
... KILLED EACH OTHER ... OH GOD, NO!!
... YOU ... YOU ...

NOT DIRECTLY, MAJOR JORDAN. SHE WAS MY GRANDDAUGHTER. AND YOU?
I TAKE IT SHE WAS YOURS, CAPTAIN OYAMADA?
... RUMI ... "SOB"
MY ONLY CHILD. I MET SARA'S MOTHER SOME YEARS AFTER THE WAR. SHE DIED IN AN ACCIDENT AND I WOUND UP RAISING HER ON MY OWN. WE WERE SO CLOSE ....
I DEEPLY REGRET YOUR LOSS, MAJOR JORDAN.
18
YOU WENT TO ALL OF THIS TROUBLE AND EXPENSE TO RETRIEVE SOMETHING YOU HID ON THIS ISLAND DURING THE WAR. WHAT IS IT?
AND I YOURS. NOW LET'S GET TO THE POINT, CAPTAIN OYAMADA.
LIBERTY

IT'S A FLAG, MAJOR JORDAN. A VERY SPECIAL FLAG.
A FLAG?!?! YOU MEAN MY DAUGHTER DIED FOR A FUCKING FLAG?!?! GOLD OR SILVER OR EVEN PLATINUM I CAN UNDERSTAND, BUT A FLAG?!?!
I MUST COMMEND YOUR RESEARCH, MAJOR, AND YOUR JAPANESE IS EXCELLENT.
THOSE WOULD HAVE BEEN OF MORE USE TO YOU NOW THAN A FLAG! OH, I KNOW "PRESIDENT OYAMADA!" I KNOW YOUR ELECTRONICS COMPANY IS ON THE VERGE OF BANKRUPTCY! AND YOU BLEW IT ALL ON ALL OF THIS!!!
COMES FROM BEING AN INTELLIGENCE OFFCER DURING THE WAR. THAT'S WHEN I FIRST HEARD OF YOU.
19
ALL RIGHT! LET'S SEE IT!!
BOSS! MAJOR JORDAN! WE FOUND A BOX AT THE BOTTOM OF THIS HOLE! IT'S BUILT VERY STURDY! WE'RE GOING TO BRING IT OUT!

WE GOT THE LOCK OFF, AND --WHAT THE HELL?!?!
IT'S JUST A FLAG, MAJOR! NOTHING BUT A FUCKIN' FLAG!!
NO ....
HEY, WAIT! THIS AIN'T NO ORDINARY FLAG!! IT'S A JAP BATTLE FLAG!!!
20
A FUCKIN' JAP BATTLE FLAG ....
DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH A COLLECTOR WILL PAY FOR THIS?!? IT MAY NOT BE GOLD BUT IT'S ALMOST AS GOOD!!

WHAT THE FUCK?! THE WAR'S OVER, BOSS, AND THE JAPS LOST! AND DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH COLLECTORS BACK IN THE STATES WILL PAY FOR SOMETHING LIKE THIS?!
THAT'S A BATTLE STANDARD! YOU TREAT IT WITH PROPER RESPECT!
DON'T TALK LIKE THAT!!!
EVEN I AS AN AMERICAN WILL SHOW THE PROPER RESPECT.
THOSE ARE HIS UNIT COLORS. THEY ARE SACRED, JUST LIKE OUR OWN CIVIL WAR BATTLE FLAGS. NO OUTSIDERS ARE SUPPOSED TO HANDLE THEM!
I'M ONLY GOING TO SAY THIS ONCE. YOU WILL GIVE THAT FLAG TO THIS MAN.
21
"SIGH" YOU WEREN'T IN THE SERVICE. I GUESS YOU'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND.
WHO THE FUCK DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?! BATTLE FLAGS?! RESPECT?!? YOU'RE CRAZY, THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE, AND I'M NOT PUTTING UP WITH THAT KIND OF SHIT FOR ONE MINUTE! YOU HEAR ME?!
IT'S JUST A FUCKIN' PIECE OF CLOTH!
.. BUT HOW CAN I EXPLAIN IT TO YOU?
ONLY THOSE OF US WHO HAVE FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME CAN REALLY UNDERSTAND. IT'S A LONG STORY ...

MEN RISK THEIR LIVES FOR THEIR UNIT COLORS. THEY DID THEIRS, WE DID OURS, AND OTHERS DID THEIRS TO. IT'S STILL DONE TODAY. OH, HOW I WISH YOU COULD UNDERSTAND.
I KNOW, BECAUSE I DID THE SAME IN MY YOUTH, DURING THE WAR ....
THEY PLACED AS MUCH VALUE ON THIS FLAG WHEN THEY HELD IT BEFORE THEM GOING INTO BATTLE AS WE DID OUR OWN BATTLE FLAGS, LIKE ALL SUCH STANDARDS THROUGHOUT HISTORY.
YOU AND ME BOTH, SIR. THANK YOU AND MAY YOU LIVE LONG.
WE MAY NEVER MEET AGAIN, BUT PLEASE ACCEPT THESE WITH MY GREATEST RESPECT. I ONLY WISH THEY HAD NOT COST THE PRICE THEY DID.
I USED IT TO HONOR YOU, MAJOR FOSS JORDAN, JUST AS YOU HONOR ME WITH MY TONGUE.
BETTER STICK TO JAPANESE. YOU ENGLISH IS TERRIBLE, *CHUCKLE* BUT THANKS.
22
I'M OPEN TO ANY SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW.
I HAVE THE COLORS. OUR JOB HERE IS DONE. LET'S GO BACK TO JAPAN. I HAVE A COMPANY TO REBUILD.
CHINA'S A GOOD PLACE! LOTS OF RESOURCES THERE!
PRESIDENT OYAMADA!
HOLD IT! DON'T FIRE!!

BUT MR. PRESIDENT?! WHAT ABOUT US?! YOU HAVE A CONTRACT WITH US TO KILL ALL INVADERS ON THIS ISLAND! NOW YOU'RE TELLING US NOT TO?!?!

HE GAVE THE COLORS BACK WILLINGLY. HE IS A GOOD MAN. LET HIM AND HIS COMPANIONS GO FREE.

DO NOT HURT THAT MAN OR THE REST OF HIS PARTY.

23

LET'S GET SARA'S BODY AND HEAD BACK TO THE SUB. IT'S TIME TO GO.

WELL ... THAT'S THAT. LIKE THE MAN SAID, I'M TIRED OF KILLING. TOO MANY, AND TOO CLOSE.

I'M DONE WITH KILLING. TOO MANY HAVE DIED TODAY ... AND TOO CLOSE.

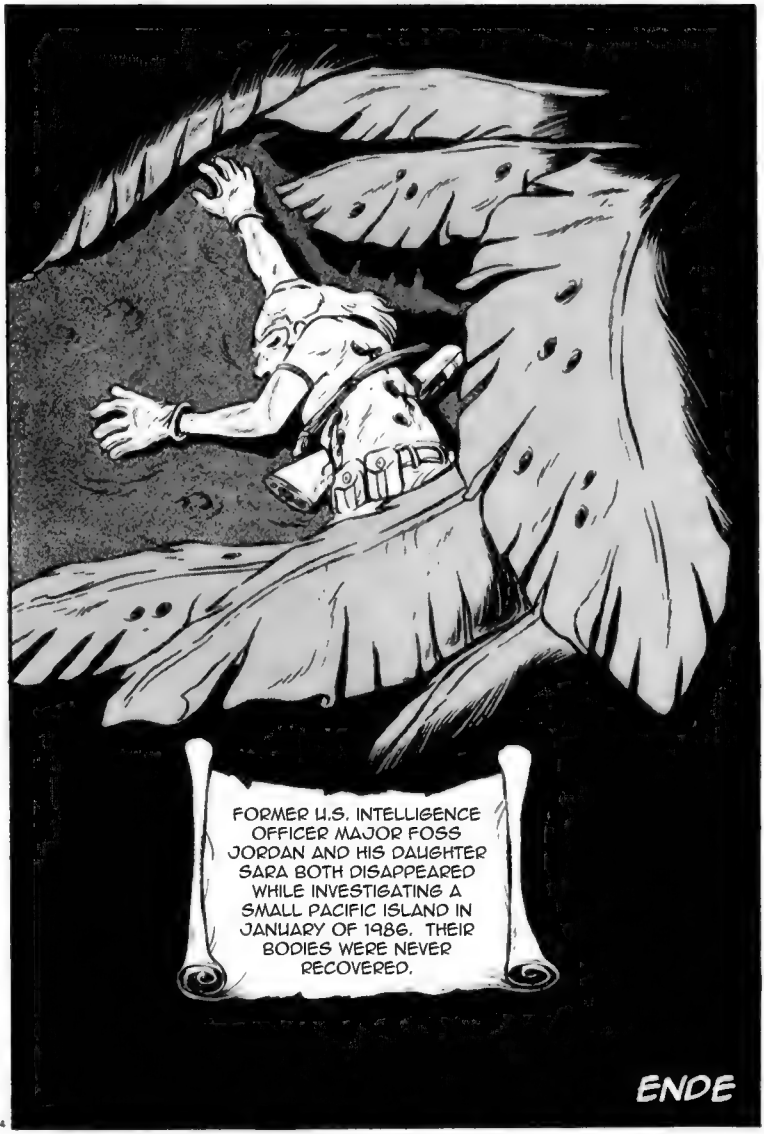
I TOLD YOU, WE'RE *LEAVING!*

THERE MIGHT STILL BE MORE LOOT HERE, JORDAN!!!

JUST LIKE THAT ... YOU'RE GONNA WALK AWAY JUST LIKE THAT?!

Y-YES SIR. WE'RE COMING.

NO ...


FORMER U.S. INTELLIGENCE OFFICER MAJOR FOSS JORDAN AND HIS DAUGHTER SARA BOTH DISAPPEARED WHILE INVESTIGATING A SMALL PACIFIC ISLAND IN JANUARY OF 1986. THEIR BODIES WERE NEVER RECOVERED.
ENDE

HARD METAL

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SHOGAKUKAN BIG COMICS

HARD METAL

by L.MATSUMOTO

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